THE

HALL

OF

HELLINGSLEY;

A Tale.

By Sir S. E. BRYDGES, Bart.

&c. &c. &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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THE

HALL OF HELLINGSLEY.

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HUNTLEY'S RETURN TO WOLSTENHOLME. — CHANGE OF FEELINGS SINCE HIS FORMER RESIDENCE HERE. — BEHAVIOUR OF MARGARET GREY, REYNOLD GREY, AND JAMES COWLEY.

THE length of time that Huntley had now been absent from Wolstenholme, and the accounts of his illness, made Sir Ambrose Grey, who took a lively interest in his welfare, recall him. When he arrived at the Castle, all were struck with his altered and emaciated looks. A scar in his forehead: an unclosed wound at the back of his head, added to the fears for him.

Huntley could not give a very distinct account of the accident, if accident it was. He represented himself as having been attacked by robbers or assassins, who, following his heels secretly, stunned him by blows, when he could not perceive the hands from whence they came. It was in the neighbourhood of Cheeveley, and, therefore, in the ordinary course of his rambles: the reception into the parsonage of Mr. Barney seemed to follow, from that house being nearest to the accident.

There is a time of life at which a few months are like an age. This, Huntley at present experienced. He came back with strangely-altered views and feelings. He talked little, and listened only by fits.

The manners at Wolstenholme were too rough, and the conversation too little speculative. Too much was said of the pleasures of the chase; and there was too little of those ideal ambitions, which create what they desire.

The society here was not, indeed, totally unfrequented by men of literature. Lord Grey's rank called upon him to be sometimes a patron of literary men. Old Michael Drayton, the poet, lived in a neighbouring county, and paid occasional visits here. He happened to come hither three days after Huntley's return.

His conversation was copious and instructive, but somewhat prolix. Perhaps it may be asserted, that he was a poet rather of artifice than of nature. His imagination appears to have been all forced; all applied to illustration of studied thoughts, or studied facts; never the flow of the unsought visitings of the Muse. He never seemed

> "To feed on thoughts, that voluntary move
> Harmonious numbers; as the wakeful bird
> Sits darkling, and, in shadiest covert hid,
> Tunes her nocturnal note."

The *Poly-olbion* is a wonderful work of labour, knowledge, instruction, and ingenious composition; but it is insup-

portably tedious. He seems to have considered the visions of poetry as matters of decoration, not of reality. He, therefore, neither possessed in himself, nor could produce in others, "the believing mind," of which Collins so happily speaks. He dealt not in those native and universal images, to the reception of which the human intellect is predisposed.

With this cast of character, Huntley found him at present rather repulsive to the temperament of enthusiasm, which was congenial to the state of sentiment that ruled over his own head and heart.

Pale, and pensive, he spoke little, but read much. Sir Ambrose watched his alarming looks with an anxiety so unusual to him, as to excite the remarks of the whole house. Among a numerous family of very near relations, this stranger in name and blood seemed to be the prime object of his care. Giles Grey, he who was to carry on the title and pos-

sessions, engrossed, comparatively, little of his thoughts. Giles was not less struck than the rest; but, being of a generous and unenvious temper, and partial to the manners and disposition of Huntley, it excited no ill-will in him; but, on the contrary, a satisfaction highly honourable to his benevolent mind.

Margaret Grey, the sister of Giles, was gratified by a notice, which seemed to countenance the natural partiality she felt for Huntley. She thought that, though the boyish bloom of his cheek was passed away, in his pallid and pain-worn face, she saw still more to interest her than formerly. The contrast he exhibited to the two lovers who had lately beset her, made him appear still more advantageously in her eyes.

These two lovers were *Reynold Grey* and *James Cowley*. The first was of her own family, a second, or, perhaps, a third cousin — a dependant, living principally at the Castle: the other was a neigh-

bouring 'squire, the son of one of King James's knights.

Reynold Grey was a weak man; inoffensive, portionless, with little to recommend him but his alliance. He was a younger son; but it was believed that his elder brother had perished in one of the Duke of Cumberland's expeditions. Some persons thought that he would be next in succession to the honours, if Giles Grey should die without issue male. The fortunes of his father, aggravated by family-differences, had fallen so low, that at one time he had been engaged in a mean trade in a country town.

James Cowley was heir to a good estate, descended from a family of petty gentry of some minor antiquity. They said that they were indigenous, because they found out a little adjoining wood of their own name, which they had possessed for two or three centuries. But, such as they were, the existing branch had not lived lineally upon their present

inheritance. They had succeeded collaterally two or three generations back; and the immediate younger brother, from whom they descended, had been a fishmonger on London Bridge.

James Cowley was extremely anxious to ally himself with nobility. He had a dull, heavy sort of pride, which persevered from mere insensibility. He was fond of money, but ostentatious; and felt that a weight of purse formed the most legitimate pretension to consequence. Though he anxiously sought to be connected with the Greys, and submitted to any servility of attention or flattery, in the hope of carrying his purpose, yet he secretly hated them; and, sometimes, when he saw the irregularity of their finances, despised them. Giles Grey had an aversion to this man: he treated him not merely with coldness, but with a rudeness unlike his mild nature. Never haughty to the unpretending, he saw at once through the concealed

arrogance of this man's disposition. Not insolent on the subject of birth, he scorned and sneered at Cowley's sort of claim to it. He had yet a quiet sort of sense of dignity, which did not approve of unequal alliances; and thought, that it was dangerous to mingle the habits and sentiments of different classes. These ideas, however, were not without a variety of qualifications and exceptions.

Margaret Grey was left rather to imagine in what manner or in what degree the sentiments of Huntley differed from those of her lovers, than to hear them from him. Foı a fortnight or three weeks, his silence continued to be profound, and almost distressing. But the deep thoughtfulness of his looks, the variations of the clouds that seemed to be passing his mind, arrested her attention and interest. Something had happened in the colour and arrangement of her reflections; something of novelty in the character of her emotions, which drew her notice to

melancholy thus pictured in the face of a young man, lately smiling with health and gaiety.

The eyes of Margaret thus engaged, did not escape the notice either of Reynold Grey or of Cowley. Each of them in turn discovered to her by some petty word, or ill-managed raillery, the suspicion he had formed. It had an effect precisely contrary to that which was intended. It piqued her, and fixed her attention still more strongly on Huntley.

Huntley was grateful for her soft civility, and numerous instances of delicate watchfulness. He was flattered by the striking difference of her manner to him, and to the two men who aspired to be her rival lovers. Margaret had lately taken up ardently the love of reading. These men were therefore always endeavouring to recommend themselves to her by some discussion on books. She constantly appealed to Huntley from them both. Huntley said as little as possible:

he had no desire to display his talents or his knowledge. But the few quiet and unpretending words he spoke, showed such a vast superiority over the others, as contributed every day to raise him more and more in her esteem.

Reynold Grey knew not how to take this conduct. He would have persuaded himself that it meant nothing; that it was the mere coquetry of Margaret's spirit. He had a friendship for Huntley; he looked up to his superior gifts of nature: but such was his inveterate prejudice against what he called obscurity of birth, and such his inextinguishable confidence in the name and blood of *Grey*, that on the whole he could not admit the fear that Huntley could be put in competition with him.

As to Cowley, he deluded himself with similar conceit; but on different pretensions. He relied on estate; on descent, if less splendid than the Greys, yet utterly eclipsing Huntley; and on a

private conviction of the solidity of his own talents and acquirements, which, if a woman's superficial judgment might for a moment mistake, she would soon be taught her by better opinions. But though nothing could disturb his self-estimation, he was not the less sensible in his heart of the deep injury committed by others in calling in question, even for a moment, that superiority which he attributed to himself. He felt it, but he did not show it: his face was clothed in smiles, when his heart rankled with anger and resentment. He said to himself, "I will have my resentment; but the day is not come! It shall be the heavier for the delay!"

Cowley had a detestation of Huntley. He said to his confidential acquaintance, that he was a shallow, presumptuous, splenetic, but intriguing upstart; that he was a mere low tool of Sir Ambrose Grey, introduced into the household of Wolstenholme for some of his sinister and

unprincipled purposes; that he must fall with his principal, whose life was fast declining; and that he looked to an early day, when he might enjoy his full swing of retribution upon him.

In the presence of Sir Ambrose Grey this bold vaunter always behaved himself with a cringing and base adulation, which seemed as if all his faculties were absorbed in awe before him. Sir Ambrose treated him with a contemptuous haughtiness, as if he was not worthy even of the disguise of civility.

CHAP. II.

HUNTLEY'S MELANCHOLY. — SIR AMBROSE RECOMMENDS HIM TO THE CARE OF MARGARET GREY. — HER CONSEQUENT ATTENTIONS TO HIM.

"WHY so thoughtful, niece?" said Sir Ambrose to Margaret: "the laugh was wont to be always in your eye. Methinks you have looked strangely grave of late." Margaret started; and appeared confounded at the question. "I know not that I have been grave, uncle," she answered: "if I have been grave, then gravity is not a sign of unhappiness." — "That dull coxcomb, Cowley, cannot make you grave, I am sure," continued Sir Ambrose: "his solemn grimace can only excite laughter." — "Yes, I could laugh, uncle, if he was not trou-

blesome like the droning buzz of an humble bee." — "Well said, Madge," cried the uncle: "he is as pompous as stupid, and as useless as that insect. But it is said, niece, that he aspires to your hand." — "He may aspire then, uncle, till he is tired; for, I assure you, that he will aspire in vain." — "Well, I thought," exclaimed he, with pleased eagerness, "that the blood of Grey would not condescend to give encouragement to the addresses of such a man as 'Squire Cowley. Well; but then our placid cousin, Margaret; what say you to our placid cousin?" — "Why, that our placid cousin is too placid for your niece Margaret's taste." — "You are difficult then, it seems. Well; it becomes the daughter of the Lord Grey of Wye to be difficult."

Margaret was now glad to escape; and Sir Ambrose reserved his farther observations for another time.

When Sir Ambrose came to the hall

at dinner, he remarked a more than usual appearance of pain and illness in the countenance of Huntley. He noticed that he ate little, and spoke not a word. Huntley told him, on enquiry, that he felt excruciating pangs from the wounds in his head. Sir Ambrose observed, that Margaret listened with a most anxious face to the answers given to his enquiries. "I have observed, niece," he said to her, "that there is nothing equal to female tenderness. I commit this poor young man to your care. You know that I take an interest in his fate, and have made myself responsible for his protection."

The whole face of Margaret was covered with the deepest red; and the tears came so largely into her eyes, that with difficulty she wiped them off. "I will do as well as I can, uncle," she answered in a low, hesitating tone: "but surely you impose a very delicate task upon me, for which I am very ill qualified."

Margaret, when alone, began to consider what this could mean. The character of her uncle, Sir Ambrose, had been from her childhood the subject of mingled fear and respect. She had especially remarked, that he never did any thing lightly, and without design. That Huntley was his own peculiar *protégé*, was known to all the house; but he had not hitherto been considered as a *protégé* quite of equality. This arose from the total ignorance of every one of the house whence he sprung. No one had such fixed and determined pride on the subject of descent as Sir Ambrose. In him it was not a boast of speculative argument, but of undoubting confidence. He held it for himself: he held it still more for the head of the house, and his issue. She was, therefore, quite surprized, to notice the exact tone of equality on which he now put Huntley. Hitherto he had always given him credit for personal merits; but it was always said in a man-

ner, as if it was taken for granted that there were certain divisions of society, which personal merits could not interfere with.

The duty that Sir Ambrose seemed now willing to impose upon her implied a perfect equality, and lifted Huntley into a state of consideration never hitherto attempted in the house.

Huntley, in violent bodily pain, augmented by great mental anxiety, retired to bed. The next morning, instead of joining the field-amusements, which here were never left unpursued, he retired to one of the bow-windows of the library, where he sat in solitude and silence for several hours. The warm sun of an early spring beamed upon the window. It looked upon a terrace, beyond which was a grove of ancient elms. From this grove, and even from the dwarf-trees that adorned the terrace, and from the ivy that hung in thick clusters round the window, and over the battlements, birds

began with a weak prelude to commence their vernal songs. He took the *Fairy Queen*, and he bewildered himself with its romantic visions. He found the pages sometimes filled with a MS. copy of additional stanzas: he turned to the commencement, and he found a *second* Sonnet to *Arthur Lord Grey of Wilton*, written on a blank page; and what was his delight, when he discovered it to be in the hand of *Spenser* himself? He looked farther, and on the back of the title found also written the following

SONNET,

To Edmund, Lord Grey of Wyc.

And thou, too, who the like bold ancestry
Dost justly boast; in generous blood the same,
In worth illustrious mingled as in name;
Take, noble Lord, these tales of heroes high,
And read these legends of fair chastity,
Whose gentleness could savage lions tame,
And safety mid infernal orgies claim.
Then consecrate with honour's swelling sigh,

The trials virtue bears in cause of truth,
  The pangs of valour, when he strives in vain
  To do the deeds that duty bids essay;
The deep despondence, that impassion'd youth
  Feels, when desert, a victim in the train
  Of tyrant power, bows down to crime a prey!

Huntley now gave himself up to the wildest moods of fancy; but he was almost too weak for those lively impressions, which coursed each other through his brain. A faintness came on, and he fell into a profound slumber.

He waked; a figure was standing over him; he started. A soft voice said, "Do not be alarmed, Harry. I am come to obey my uncle's orders; and to enquire after you. You have been doing very wrong: the window is open; and you have been sleeping in the air, which though bright is sharp, when I perceive that you are in a fever."

Huntley thanked her for her attention; and was pleased with this instance of her kindness. He was already disposed to

new veneration for this illustrious house, to whom he owed nurture and protection. Spenser had now thrown a fairy charm round them. He could say to the Lord Grey, as the great poet said to his cousin Lord Arthur:

"Most noble Lord, the pillar of my life,
And patron of my Muse's pupillage,
Through whose large bounty poured on me rife
In the first season of my feeble age,
I now do live, bound yours by vassalage." *

He looked in Margaret's countenance, and began to fancy, that there was a grace in it which he had not before seen. "You are too good," said he, "to one who does not deserve such condescending attention." — "Others must judge of that," said Margaret; "you heard what Sir Ambrose said." — "He is too good to me," answered Huntley, while

* Sonnet to Arthur, Lord Grey of Wilton, prefixed to Spenser's *Fairy Queen*.

a tear started from his eye. "I see, that you have not recovered from that wound," continued Margaret.. "You have lost the liveliness that used to make us all so happy. I do not think those dismal woods round Cheeveley well for you, Harry. I shall not permit you to go there again: for you know that you are under my dominion now," (smiling archly,) "are you not?" Huntley sighed. "O that sigh, Harry; it is rude; it is intolerable; and so you sigh at being under my dominion." — "I am, indeed," said he gently, citing Spenser again,

—— "bound yours by vassalage!"

— "O not by *vassalage*, Harry; none of your vassalage; what frightful, cold, ungallant words. I came hither to put you into spirits; to soothe you; to please you — not to draw from you pathetic sentences, and sighs, and moralities, and gratitudes, and formalities! — I will not

forgive the air of Wolstenholme, if it does not put you into something of a more smiling humour. Oh!—but I have found out the secret; now I think of it, Huntley: shall I tell it you?—Yes, I will. You have left your heart at Cheeveley; there it is put under a turf-mound, and buried in the woods like a forgotten hermit's. Some of these days I will skip upon the saddle of the dun Florimel, and go and dig it up, and bring it back to you. Oh, but let me consider! How shall I confine it? It will be so glad to be released, that the moment the turf is off it, it will most assuredly fly away from me! Ah! well: I will take with me a strong chain, and bring it back a prisoner, bound so fast, that it shall never be released till you ask it back of me!"

"And shall I not ask it back?" said he, with a very forced affectation of liveliness, which he did not at all feel: "who would be without an heart?"—"Not when it is in a lady's keeping?"

she replied, still smiling with her usual raillery. "Now I perceive that the effects of your abode in these savage woods are incurable; and that you are become as rude as their native and constant inmates." — "I know that I am not fit for the gayer regions of Wolstenholme," he cried, more than half seriously.— "It is your own fault if you are not," said Margaret: "you are fit for whatever you choose to be fit for." He answered, "that would be an high compliment, indeed, if you were serious: but I know that it is not deserved." — "You are getting very serious, I am sure," said Margaret; "or rather have always been so of late: I wish I could laugh you out of these melancholy words. Do let me, for the sake of my credit with Sir Ambrose: I shall lose all his favour if I do not."

He put his hand to his head. "I see you are fatigued," she exclaimed in a tone a little piqued. "You forget this

wound in my head," he replied. "I am sure your kindness would be sufficient to make me cheerful, if this accident would have allowed me to be so."

Margaret's pride, which had taken the alarm, was soothed by this acknowledgement. She persuaded Huntley to quit the window, and take a short walk upon the terrace. The air refreshed him; the genial warmth of the young sun, the new-born perfumes of commencing vegetation, gave a momentary life to his enfeebled frame. Margaret saw the beam of his powerful eye, and was pleased. He looked upon the distant shades of Funhope Crags, that opposed their umbrageous heights to the morning rays. The tender green was running with rapidity over their rugged surface. The grand scenes of nature always revived the vigour of Huntley's soul. He turned his eye from these Crags upon other features of the magnificent domains of Wolstenholme, and said, "What is hap-

piness, that these proud possessions do not seem to confer it?"

Margaret now ceased to talk. She observed the profound meditation into which Huntley had fallen, and was unwilling to disturb it. She began to turn in her mind the traits of character which Huntley now displayed. She was not sure that the alterations she observed were to be entirely attributed to the accidental wounds he had received. Hitherto he had discovered active talents; but they seemed to be more practical, than speculative. He had been expert in all the manly amusements of the chase; he excelled in military exercises; his animal spirits enabled him to contend with the lively and clamorous.

The few sentiments he uttered, and the few arguments he used, were now of an opposite nature to those he formerly urged with impetuous eagerness. His tutor, whose house at Cheeveley he had lately quitted, was well known to be a

man of a very thoughtful disposition. He had been chosen partly for that reason; because Sir Ambrose considered the boy endowed rather with too much, than with two little, vivacity. But this turn of the tutor had hitherto had no effect on the pupil: he had come back almost boisterous in his manners; in his addiction to robust occupations, and in his zest for the more cheerful pursuits of the intellect.

Huntley's strength began to fail him: he sat down on a bench at the end of the terrace. Margaret made an effort to recommence a conversation. She asked for an account of his life at Cheeveley; and of the scenes round it. He told her, it would not be to her taste; that it consisted of the solitude, and the wild woodlands, which she often exclaimed against. She had heard of the Barneys: she asked about them with a curiosity which he chilled by the reserve of his replies.

She now persuaded him to return to

the house, fearing the deceitful allurement of these early suns. He retired to his apartment, and fell into a variety of melancholy reveries, which added to the fever of his brain.

Margaret took the earliest opportunity of relating to Sir Ambrose the manner in which she had endeavoured to obey his injunctions. She hinted to him her suspicion, that there was something beyond the wound which was at the root of his illness. She said, that his melancholy seemed fixed, and the whole colours of his mind were changed.

CHAP. III.

MARGARET GREY'S ATTENTIONS TO HUNTLEY NOTICED. — RUMOURS THAT HUNTLEY IS SON OF SIR AMBROSE GREY. — CHARACTER AND CONDUCT OF SIR AMBROSE.

Something of what had passed between Sir Ambrose Grey, his niece Margaret Grey, and Huntley, could not long remain unobserved in the house. Cowley had his spies; Reynold Grey had his spies. All were kept in check only by the dread, which every one had, of Sir Ambrose.

They knew his penetration; they knew his means of injury; they knew the dominion he held over the mind of Lord Grey. They were utterly at a loss to guess the motives of his present conduct: His scorn of Cowley, and his mean opinion of Reynold Grey, were familiar to

every inhabitant of the castle. His desire to aggrandize his family; his difficulty about alliances; the manner in which he had been the means of breaking off two or three very fair matches for his niece Margaret, solely on the ground that they were not equal to his own sense of the dignity of his blood, were common topics of discussion.

To account for the manner, in which it was apparent that he now brought forward Huntley, a rumour, which had at all times been slightly afloat, was now strongly entertained, that Huntley was his son. This, indeed, would not very reasonably account for the change in his conduct to him. If his son, he was still only his *natural* son: for nobody had ever heard that Sir Ambrose had been married. And why, if he could reconcile himself to put his natural son upon a footing with the legitimate issue of the family, not have done so before?

Huntley was returned, after some

months of absence, in a state of health not to augment the hopes, and inflame the pride of a father! He had gone forth in the very bloom of youthful vigour, with elasticity of spirits, with gaiety of heart, with attractive cheerfulness of manners; the delight of the field, the envy of the handsome, the leader of the bold. He had come back wounded, feeble, trembling, gloomy, despondent.

Of what had passed at Cheeveley, no one happened to have any distinct intelligence. They, therefore, invented a thousand stories, too ridiculous to be repeated. But something about the Berkeleys was very darkly and cautiously suggested.

Sir Ambrose was, secretly, as much hated as he was dreaded. There was therefore an unusual quantity of venom in the nature of the stories, that were now invented about him. These stories did not reach either Lord Grey, or his son, or daughter. The whisperers did

not dare to trust them: they knew, that they would thus find their way to Sir Ambrose; and recoil upon the heads of the propagators.

Meantime it was insinuated with a great deal of diligence, that Margaret was in love with Huntley. Many circumstances were related in confirmation of it: and as she certainly grew more pensive, and every day treated both Cole and her cousin Reynold with more haughtiness, she herself contributed to give at least a semblance of truth to the report.

Under the sanction of her uncle's request, she continued her assiduous attentions to Huntley. She was content to take the tone of the only conversations, into which she could draw him, and to allow him occasionally to read to her the most melancholy passages of the most melancholy poets, in which he dwelt with gloomy energy on sentiments ill accordant to her native propensities. In his

present weak spirits, and morbid state of sensibility, she dared not, in opposition to many of the passages that he selected, mention that beautiful stanza of Spenser, which she would have pointed out if she had had the courage:

"Why then dost thou, O man! that of them all
Art lord, and also of nature sovereign,
Wilfully make thyself a wretched thrall,
And waste thy joyous hours in needless pain,
Seeking for danger and adventures vain?
What boots it all to have, and nothing use?
Who shall him rue, that swimming in the main,
Will die for thirst, and water doth refuse?
Refuse such fruitless toil, and present pleasures choose *!"

Margaret could not approve of those growing habits of abstraction, in which she remarked that Huntley every day more delighted. But she knew that the disease, if it was a disease, was too deep to be laughed away. The more it preyed inwardly, the more it was con-

* Fairy Queen, B. ii. Canto vi. St. xvii.

cealed, the less likely it was to evaporate. Her heart ached with a conflict of sickening pains, when she often read the proofs of a too solemn enthusiasm, which often dropped from his books in scattered fragments of written poetry. She had collected twenty or thirty, of the same tenor as the following.

FRAGMENT.

Deep slumber seal'd mine eyes; and all without
Was raven darkness: but a flood of light
Blazed in the inmost temples of my heart.
I saw her sit upon a throne of stars:
The lilly whiteness of her vest was pierced
By radiance, like the shooting beams of morn.
And then she waved her hand, and said to me,
" Be not of earth! those mirey dregs of earth
Will cloy the heavenliest spirit: — Come away;
And dwell with me in these immortal realms!"
Then sweetest music rose; and all around
Trembled with inexpressive harmony.
The rapture shook my frame; and I awoke!
I oped my eyes on darkness, and was sad;
More sad from contrast of foretasted bliss!

The attachment of Margaret was pointed out to the observation of her brother.

He smiled, at first, at this intelligence as idle suspicion. Placid, good-humoured, frank, undesigning, he was long in believing that things went out of the ordinary course. He had a friendship for Huntley; but he had never considered him as standing upon a sufficient equality to make pretensions to the hand of his sister.

He talked to Huntley, who was reserved upon the subject of affections; but he could not infer from any thing in the whole tenor of his sentiments, that Margaret was the object of his choice, or of his designs.

At this period, he observed his sister so strikingly altered in her manner and her looks, as he could not suppose to have taken place without some powerful cause. He questioned her: she appealed to Sir Ambrose for the part that she had been acting.

Giles talked with his uncle on this affair. Sir Ambrose seemed inclined to

laugh it off; or rather mixed raillery with something like reproach for thinking the question worthy of discussion.

Giles separated from his uncle on this occasion, less satisfied than it was his custom to be. His mind was generally quiescent under the overbearing positiveness of Sir Ambrose.

He communicated to his father the result of his conversation. Lord Grey turned pale. "Giles," he said, "your uncle is of a temper that I never had the courage to oppose. I consider this weakness among the faults for which I have to answer—not altogether of a light kind. He is my junior in age, not more than a year: at an earlier period of our boyhood, his hard vindictive temper overcame my spirits. Your grandfather was of a sterner disposition than I am: he saw that his disposition must be controlled; and he ruled him with a rod of iron: my brother submitted to force; but was not softened. Being of an ad-

ventrous turn, he early took to arms; and led several years a life of great hardships and perils. He came home after my father's death, proud, imperious, boastful, vain; and soon became the most distinguished gentleman in the county in every amusement, which requires strength and agility of body, and a daring courage.

"He had a person and countenance strikingly handsome, manly, and noble. His animal spirits, and arrogant self-confidence gave unqualified force to the dictates of a strong but unimproved understanding. He gave himself up at times to riotous companions; and, I am afraid, has led a very dissolute life with regard to women.

"When he came back, my Castle was open to him, as it has always been the custom of our family, to our relations. He embraced my hospitality with the frankness and sincerity with which it was offered. By a sort of silent understand-

ing between us, I never enquired into his affairs; nor the riches he acquired in some of the sea-adventures, which are supposed to have been successful. He was frightfully jealous of the suspicion of not being thought rich. To shew his independence, he bought *The Hall of Hellingsley*, where, as you well know, he has ever since spent a part of the year.

"It has excited wonder, that, considering the cordial terms we have ever lived upon, I have never been in the habit of visiting him there. But this was in consequence of a resolution immediately adopted, and acquiesced in; though rather from mutual consciousness of the attendant circumstances, than from any expressed explanation between us.

"I was then married to your mother, a woman of great beauty and delicacy, and of the most conscientious and rigid morals. Hellingsley, as might be expected, proved itself to be a residence where little regard was paid to habits of

sobriety and decency. Some favourite lady, who could not claim the title of wife, always presided at the table; and of the person holding this seat, change was generally the first recommendation.

"With these very great faults, I owe it to your uncle to declare, that he has been kinder to me than I could have hoped from his nature. I have, in numerous instances, profited by his understanding and experience; and I believe that he has an ardent regard for the honour and prosperity of our family. At the same time, what you now impart alarms me very much.

"I have always myself thought, that Huntley was his natural son. I have also observed, that of late his affection for him, and notice of him, have very much increased. I cannot account for this: it may be, that he had a greater regard for his mother; but I think I have observed his health to be on the decline; and, perhaps, when life is at the ebb, the heart softens.

"If you look at Huntley's countenance, you will often catch, for a moment, a striking likeness to my brother: and then it is gone again. If he be his son, he had probably a mother of a very different cast.

"Hitherto, Giles, the interests of your uncle, and myself, have not clashed. If Huntley be his son, they may clash here. I wish I could think, my dear Giles, that we might rely on his principles as a protection against his interest. You would not have your sister Margaret the wife of a bastard, even of our own house."

"Heaven forbid!" cried Giles. "But let me do justice to Huntley!" he continued, "I do not believe him capable of any dishonourable scheme: and if he be, indeed, my cousin, there is no cousin of whom I could be so proud, were he but legitimate. In that case, I could not wonder at Margaret's partiality; but between ourselves, I doubt if he is partial

to her. I am strongly suspicious that he has another attachment." —

"We must wait, then, a little longer the developements of time," said Lord Grey with his usual good humour, and confidence in the current course of human affairs.

CHAP. IV.

ALICE RETURNS TO HARDINGVILLE. — THE STATE OF HER MIND, AND MODE OF OCCUPYING HERSELF THERE. — HER INTERVIEWS WITH A KEEPER'S DAUGHTER.

How was Alice Berkeley passing her time during this anxious crisis? From the day that Huntley was sufficiently recovered from his wounds to be removed from the parsonage, Alice suffered numerous varying anxieties, which gave the deepest of melancholy to all her feelings.

It was yet deemed advisable, that she should return to Hardingville. Her father's health required her filial attentions. But Hardingville was more solitary and gloomy than ever. Sir Oliver's faculties merely glimmered by fits. Long days passed, during which he appeared in a stupor, that she beheld with sighs and tears.

But she knew that she had great duties to perform; and where nature has been profuse of intellectual gifts, Hope seldom fails to be an occasional visitor there.

Grief had not extinguished, or torpified her powers: it was that peculiar kind, in its effects upon her, which rather stimulated them into new paths, and gave an interest to those high and impassioned exertions of genius, which, in the more playful views of her former life, had seemed too solemn and abstract.

She had caught from Huntley a tone of lofty enthusiasm, which made her extort some sort of bitter delight even from misfortune and suffering. Her mortified pride consoled itself while it beheld the House of Hardingville visited by the storms; and she contemplated the ruins of its mouldering walls with a sort of gloomy, but almost patient, defiance.

In the lonely life of her childish days at the Parsonage, she had taught herself to read French and Italian with little as-

sistance. She did not find the Library of Hardingville wanting in books in these languages. Petrarch now became, above all others, her favourite; and she delighted in his wild and ardent spiritualities, till she began almost to worship him.

She had hitherto been fond of the poems of Lord Surrey, with whose house, I believe, she had some alliance. She now found that he struck with a timid hand, but a few feeble notes of Petrarch's lyre. He wanted force, and enduring fire, and, above all, invention.

She felt poetry in all its best pathos, and noblest elevation. To write it in a similar manner requires, in addition to genius, long exercise, unfluctuating confidence, and many technical acquirements. But who, that feel as poets, will not sometimes endeavour to express themselves as poets? Alice, for her own amusement, began to fill her writing-desk with the unstudied effusions of her heart; or

light and bold sketches of the imagery that haunted her brain, and refused to depart at her bidding, from her mental vision. In this way, often, "like Philomel's," "her song,"

> "In its sweetest, saddest plight,
> Smooth'd the rugged brow of Night,"

In this way she made existence, in the midst of the most acute and appalling afflictions, not only endurable, but sometimes even luxurious. She thus addressed herself at this time to Melancholy:

SONNET.

To Melancholy.

O Thou, that seated on a pillowy cloud,
Sitst solemn brooding with thy broad black wings
O'er these decaying turrets! if but springs
A breeze to move thy footstool; or if loud
The lark, of her aerial journey proud,
Carols her blithesome harmony; or rings
Aught else of tuneful joy from Nature's strings;
How grateful have I to thy sceptre bow'd,
O sable-stoled Melancholy! Smile,
Though, through thy sadness, let a ray of light
Ev'n but the skirts of thy wide mantle gild,

And I will strive this sorrow to beguile,
That has, with such a gloom of thickest Night,
The deep recesses of my bosom fill'd!

It is the open air exercise, the change of seasons, the varying scenery of nature, that can alone make solitude safe, or great sorrow within the compass of endurance by an high imagination.

Alice, while she strove to reduce either the history, character, or fate of Huntley, or her own future prospects within the range of any rational arguments, first became bewildered, and then began to despair. Dizzy, a cold sinking weight at her heart, an aching dullness in all her limbs, she was accustomed to escape from herself, and to brave danger and the interruption of savage intruders in those parts of the Park, where the airs of Heaven blew freest, and where the sounds of nature were heard most distinctly through the awful silence of all around.

Fatigue gave those sound and refresh-

ing slumbers, when this mortal tenement, in the plenitude of its repose, leaves the soul to expatiate at its own free will. Then this black and tremendous cloud, that hung over the House of Hardingville, gathering round its towers, and growling with thunder over its muttering, shaking, groaning roofs, broke off at once a thousand ways, penetrated and dissipated by piercing beams of golden light, and a voice cried : " Hope, Hardingville, in the midst of darkness, lift thy faded banners again : let thy turrets glitter in the broad day : ring out the harp, and sound the bugle and the horn, till the vaulted roof trembles, and laughs through all its echoes !"

When she waked, how often did the Spirit of the Vision still sit upon all her senses ! She heard it, when the chill blast blew hollow through the lonely court ; and solitude, and dereliction, and weeping were the dismal inhabitants of the apartments.

When she wandered in the Park, she gave herself up to poetical creations. The magnificent trees that adorned and covered, it were the companions of her affection, and the objects of her reverence. She thus apostrophised a Storm in the ensuing lines.

SONNET.

To a Storm.

" Blow, blow, thou bitter Wind;" and let thy shriek
Howl through the Forests! They will bow to thee;
And hail, with open arms, their enemy!
If, as in groans they bend, at length they break,
Thus will they in their noble downfall speak:
We smile, great Element, at thy decree:
We yield as to our fated destiny!
Thy stripes from very saplings we could seek;
And bear thy visitings! Thou taughtst us how
More firm beneath the earth to fix our feet;
And when we quaked and trembled through each bough,
With heads up-waved in air thy blasts to greet!
It is the axe of man that we behold
With horror, and the thirst of crime-stained gold!

In this state of enthusiasm Alice would willingly have again encountered the wild

conversation of Kate the Gypsey. Sometimes she imagined, that she saw her gliding among the distant glades; sometimes she thought she heard her song in the vallies, or from the summits of the rocks, that rose clothed with beech and pine on the confines of the Park.

Kate did not appear; but Alice loved occasionally to talk with the forest-children, and girls who watched the herds, and attended their fathers while employed in the wood-work of the coverts and groves: she delighted to suppose that they were happy in this simple life. It was, perhaps, a poetical and visionary hope. But still it may be believed, that the breezes of heaven, and the images and perfumes of nature, operating with unmingled force upon the senses, bestowed, at times, a very gratifying and luxurious consciousness of existence. It is, indeed, the association of intellectual reflexion and ideal presence with these material sensations, of which is consti-

tuted that highest enjoyment, that our imperfect, yet aspiring being is capable of arriving at. But, though education and culture bring forward these ingredients of happiness into full bloom, they cannot bestow the seeds; these are sown by the bounty of Providence, and the gift of our birth. In this rude state, they must spring up in the bosom, though imperfectly, and thrill the heart with the same affections and the same raptures, though in a weaker degree.

Alice frequently talked with interest to a daughter of one of the most remote keepers, whose striking hues of wild beauty she beheld with admiration. The girl was scarcely more than sixteen years old; the bloom of health sat upon her countenance; her dark eyes beamed a radiant, yet soft kind of joy. Her form was slender, but round; her complexion inclining to brown, but thin, delicate, and lively. She was shy and modest, but full of activity, not only in her per-

son, but, apparently, in the movements of her mind.

This girl had a sweet voice, which Alice often heard when she stole upon her by surprise. She at length accustomed her to sit by her, and make the echoes of the lonely forest ring with the native modulations of her song. She learned by heart, from her, some of the simplest and most touching of the pastoral compositions that circulated among the rude and unsophisticated natives of these sylvan regions. Some of them had a kind of fresh energy, that invigorated the tones of Alice's mind.

One of them contained the usual common-place topics in favour of a pastoral life, expressed with a simple strength that, aided by the girl's voice, and person, and manner, and uttered as if its sentiments agreed with the inmost movements of her heart, induced Alice to write it down; and to desire the girl often to repeat it to her. The language

is become too obsolete for the present day; and, in endeavouring to modernize it, I am aware that all its native wildness and force has escaped me.

PASTORAL SONG:

BY A GIRL OF HARDINGVILLE FOREST,

Modernized.

1.

They taunt us with the joys that dwell
  In courts, with gorgeous splendor deck'd;
Of music's rapturing notes they tell,
  And scorn of homelier bliss affect.

2.

With jocund revel to the dance
  They boast to ply their nimble feet;
And thus, with fond affection's glance,
  The mistress of their bosoms meet.

3.

They say, that they have leave to love,
  And leisure to pursue the joy.
But we, beneath the shadowy grove,
  Our hours in purer love employ.

4.

The woodland music, better far,
  Leads us our fondness to confess;
And we, beneath the evening star,
  A tale of tenderer woe can dress.

5.

The primrose bank, a softer seat
  Than velvet cushions fring'd with gold;
And lovelier scents from violets greet,
  Than sickly art could e'er unfold.

6.

The freshness of the morning dew
  Gives new-born vigour to each sense;
And every shape in Nature's view,
  Can rapture through the frame dispense.

7.

With insult false, let greatness say,
  His is the lot that bliss bestows;
Ours is a kindlier calm by day —
  At night a more profound repose.

CHAP. V.

FURTHER ACCOUNT OF SUSAN PEMBURY, THE KEEPER'S DAUGHTER. — SUPPOSED APPARITION OF HUNTLEY. — SUSPICIONS OF SUSAN.

Susan Pembury, which was the name of the keeper's daughter, was highly pleased with the notice of Alice. Her father, Jacob, an industrious, active, and good man, was not less pleased. But, after a few weeks, Alice observed the cheeks of Susan to lose their roses, and a languor to mark her manner, very striking when contrasted with her former vivacity.

Susan began to sing plaintively, instead of making the vallies ring with the melodious powers of her voice. She listened with tears in her eyes, and drank in the sounds, with deep attention, when Alice sung to her, or recited the words

of any composition of more refined sentiment, or more elegant language.

There was something in Susan's behaviour and conversation also, as if she had a secret in her keeping, which she was either unwilling or unable to divulge.

This want of openness created some uneasiness, and some prejudices in the sentiments of Alice; she withdrew herself more from the girl; but Susan, on the contrary, hung about her with the more fondness.

In some respects, the girl's presence was often a comfort to her; for some days she had seen, or imagined that she had seen, a figure, frequently glancing at a distance, cross the forest-shades, or sitting upon sunny knolls, or traversing the vallies, or emerging from the dingles, which made her heart tremble, and brought a mist before her eyes. It seemed to her to have a great likeness to the form and air of Huntley.

But why, if it was Huntley, should he not approach her? She thought it was impossible that he could be so unkind; and why, if he had forgotten her, should he come from a distance to haunt the park of Hardingville, and at the peril of suspicion and injury?

She now persuaded herself that it was his apparition, and that it presaged some great impending evil. Her mind now yielded to gloom and terror; yet the more she shuddered at this apparition, the more her eyes were always pursuing it.

She thought she perceived that even the looks of Susan were not unfrequently directed to it. But each seemed afraid to mention it to the other.

A pipe, like that of a shepherd, but sweeter in its tones, and more skilful in its execution, was sometimes heard from the shades. Susan lifted up her eyes timidly, as much as to say, "Did you hear those notes?" yet her expression

seemed rather to indicate tender delight, than alarm and superstitious dread.

Once, when Alice was alone, the breeze brought the music of this pipe to her ear, swelling upon its wings, when, as she listened with intense awe to it, she thought she heard the accompaniment of a human voice of great sweetness. The words seemed to be the address of a lover, and, as they appeared to be the praises of a pastoral life, they would have done well to be directed to such a girl as Susan.

Alice returned home, and gave herself up to the most melancholy visions. If the figure should turn out to be human, what could she understand from it? If it should be supernatural, could she draw any but the most disastrous omens from it?

From the first moment that she caught the glance of this figure, she counted the hours and the minutes, till she was again

in the forest. She saw it in all its attitudes; she heard all its tones.

Susan did not seem more at her ease; she sighed, and she wept; and once, when the voice ceased, she muttered something like the stanza of a song in response.

"Now," said Alice, "I am determined to meet this figure, whether a human being or a spirit, and determine the intolerable pain of such a suspense!"

The next morning happened to be a brilliant sunshine, in the middle of February. She had sat an hour on a tree just felled, near a woodman, the strokes of whose axe were reverberated from the opposite hill, when the sound of a light bugle shot along the quivering air, and startled all the quadruped and feathered inhabitants of these silent recesses.

Alice looked, and saw the mysterious figure sitting with a book beneath a solitary tree, that stood on a jutting bank, cleared of underwood, on the lofty rise

that closed the valley to the west. "Defend me, all ye saints!" said she; "but I will address this airy form, if it vanish not ere I approach it!"

She rose; descended into the valley; hurried along the bottom to its head, and, with trembling steps, began to mount to the spot where she had seen the figure. As she sometimes emerged from the brushwood, she saw the form still in its position. She stopped and gazed upon it; her heart beat:—"Merciful Heaven!" said she to herself, "how like it is to Huntley!"

She rushed forward; the path crossed a little thicket in a dell; as she issued out of this thicket, the rustling of the boughs that had half overgrown the track, roused the figure from its reverie. It gave a look, and started up, and walked hastily away.

Then Alice's courage failed her; she stood motionless; she gazed, but could not see; tears rolled down her cheeks;

she felt a sickness at her heart; her legs would not support her, and she sunk to the ground.

When she recovered herself sufficiently to think, "Does Huntley desert me thus, then?" she cried to herself; "does he fly me? does he come here to insult and aggravate my sufferings? or is this, indeed, his apparition which thus haunts me? why comes it thus? why takes it thus a material shape to others, as well as to me? why do others hear the pipe, and the voice, and the bugle, as I hear them? why does Susan seem to mutter answers to his songs? and why does her eye dance with such dangerous fire, when she seems to listen to his notes? O, how my heart sinks! what confused and unaccountable suspicions; what distracting torments assail my brain!"

She started from the ground; she hurried from the spot, and made her way, almost breathless, back to the hall. She ran along the gallery, by a circuitous

course, to her apartments, that she might avoid the eyes of any one upon her wild and tear-swoln countenance. She had nearly reached the further end, when the portrait of Orlando Grey, (the only one of that family ever honoured by a reception into Hardingville,) met her eye; she started back, and stood fixed, as if her feet would move no farther; "He smiles upon me!" she said to her heart; "Orlando Grey smiles upon me! It is just as Huntley looked the last time I caught the expression of his fond, protesting face!" A flood of tears now relieved her, and she reached her apartment in peace.

When she came to dinner, she could indulge in her own meditations unobserved; for, alas! Sir Oliver remained in a state of stupor, or infantine feebleness of intellect. She mused, and mused in vain; for she could in no way reconcile to herself the occurrences of the morning. The most painful of all her

suppositions was, that Susan knew more of this figure than she would acknowledge.

She was impatient for the arrival of another day, that might enable her, by another interview with Susan, to clear up this point. The morning came; she strolled about the park; she sought Susan at her accustomed haunts; but she was no where to be found.

She sat down, and gave her heart to visions of the deepest gloom and despair; she wept till her eyes could scarcely discern an object around her. At length the mist in some degree departed from her sight; and she saw Jacob Pembury crossing the valley towards her; but his daughter Susan was not at his heels, as she was often wont to be.

Alice now pursued the track whence Jacob had come, and which led to his home. She was fatigued and languid, and often rested on the way. She at

length heard voices in a low tone, as if conversing. A few words of a song, in a soft tremulous female voice, then caught her ear. It ceased; but it left upon her the tones of Susan's more languid and fearful notes. She listened again; a tender conversation again commenced. She distinguished the words, "*Come, live with me, and be my love!*" pronounced as if that beautiful line had been borrowed for the purpose of asking, seriously, the question it imports. O! with what darts and scorpions it ran to her heart, as she seemed again to recognize in it the peculiar accents and sounds of Huntley's voice.

She shrieked. Susan heard the scream; and in a moment was by her side. Alice had fainted. Susan was rubbing her hands; and hanging over her when she recovered. Alice opened her eyes upon her; saw her countenance; and again swooned. Again she revived. Susan was in tears; her arms supporting Alice;

her earnest, streaming eyes cast upon her in agony. "Leave me," said Alice: "leave me!"—"Leave you, beloved, adored lady!" cried Susan: "shall I leave you in this state?"—"Oh yes! leave me, Susan! you must leave me!"—a little softened. "I would rather incur your anger, than leave you so, Lady Alice!" continued Susan; "but why angry, dear Lady? how have I got your anger?"—"I cannot tell; I cannot tell; I am very ill," said Alice, "very ill indeed!" "But that is a reason why I should *not* leave you!" exclaimed Susan, sobbing. "O, I know not what I say!" cried Alice: "I am possessed; I am haunted! Are there not spirits and apparitions around us?"

"I have seen no apparitions!" answered Susan, sighing and colouring. Alice fired: her voice for the first time took a tone of fury: "O you wicked little thing!" said Alice, "it is all real then! it is yourself; and not your ap-

parition, that talks so secretly to young lovers in disguise." Susan started, stared, and, for a moment, could scarcely believe her own ears. She then burst into the loudest convulsions of sorrow: she prayed Alice not to be angry with her: she fell upon her knees before her; and with uplifted and clasped hands, implored her forgiveness if she had done any thing wrong?

Alice began to relent. There was an earnestness in Susan's manner unlike guilt; and her suspicions abated. "Are you then the Susan that I adopted three months ago?" said Alice, looking anxiously in her face. "Except as far as I have been improved by your goodness!" answered Susan. — "No deception, Susan! no flattery!" — "I cannot flatter! I cannot deceive! indeed I cannot!" cried Susan, scarce articulately from the interruption of her tears.

Alice's generosity of nature now overcame even the violence of her former

preceding suspicions, even on a point on which hung all the strongest affections of her heart. All, it is true, remained unexplained: and her ear could not be entirely deluded: but she must, at least for a few hours, nourish confidence, and live upon airy hope.

She took Susan's cold hand: she pressed it to her bosom: she said to her, "I will believe, then, that those soft and tender eyes, and that imploring voice, cannot deceive! At least I will trust till to-morrow; and then we will talk more upon this subject, when, I pray, that we may both be more calm!"

Susan then exclaimed, "Blessings on my dear Lady Alice! Blessings on her kindness!" She put her head upon Alice's knees; hid her face; and sobbed for several minutes.

CHAP. VI.

ALICE'S EXAMINATION OF SUSAN. — COMMENCEMENT OF SUSAN'S NARRATIVE.

During that afternoon and night, Alice fixed in her own mind the course she would pursue towards Susan. The strange occurrence of the morning could not be suffered to remain in doubt, if it was possible to clear it up.

Susan had promised Alice to meet her at an early hour at one of the usual haunts. When Alice arrived, Susan was already there. She looked pale; and her eyes were red, as if she had been weeping. Alice began to tremble and hesitate; she was herself afraid to commence the conversation for which she had made the appointment.

"Well now, Susan!" said Alice, after a long silence, "perhaps you are calm

enough this morning, to explain some of the strange appearances of yesterday!" Susan became frightfully pale. After a pause, she answered, "I will tell every thing, beloved Lady Alice, as far as you think that I ought to tell!" — "Ought to tell?" said Alice, rather sternly; "has a girlish innocence such secrets then?" — "O! but promises and vows, Lady Alice! can you release me from promises and vows?" Alice's heart sank: her lips refused to utter what her impatience prompted.

"Promises and vows," she muttered, "if not consistent with virtue, had better be broken!" — "Virtue, dear Lady Alice!" hastily cried Susan, "indeed, indeed, I know not that I have made any vows offensive to virtue!" Alice was consoled by the *naivetè* and apparent sincerity of this exclamation.

"The question, then, Susan, which I have to put to you, is simply this: was it your voice that I heard yesterday in

conversation with one, who seemed to be making love to you?" Susan blushed, as red as scarlet. "Indeed! indeed!" cried Susan, and then she paused — "forgive me, Lady Alice! forgive me!" she went on: — "I was the person! But, O! do not frown; pray do not frown: I have neither done, nor thought any thing wrong, — indeed, I have not!" — "Who was your lover?" — "I do not know his name." — "Not know his name! are you sure that you do not know his name?" — "O do not look so angry at me! I am sure — indeed, indeed, I am sure!" "Whence does he come?" "I am ignorant, Lady Alice! but it is from a distance! O, you kill me with that countenance, so unlike my dear, kind, generous Lady Alice! I shall faint if you look so! I cannot talk if you do not encourage me more." "Well, Susan!" a little gentler; "well, then, was he a gentleman, or of your own rank in life?" — "O! a gentleman,

Lady Alice — a gentleman almost fit for you, if any one could be fit for you." "I must know more of this, Susan: how came you to aspire to gentlemen?" — "I did not aspire, Lady Alice: he *would* keep me company, though I prayed him to leave me to myself."

Alice was breathless at this information. She paused from mere exhausture: a tempest was brewing in her bosom; and her faculties seemed almost to desert her. She put her hand before her face; and resting her elbow on her knee, sat for a few moments motionless.

At length she said, abruptly and fiercely, "And pray, Madam Susan, what was the height of this gentleman?" — "Not more than five feet eight inches." Alice's face relaxed into a smile. "And how came you to know so exactly this young man's height?" she cried. — "Because I am sure he is not taller than my father; and I know my

father's height exactly, by a wager determined only last week with Joe Hart, the keeper."

Alice was easier. Huntley was scarcely less than six feet high. She now proceeded to ask questions with much more good humour; yet not entirely without anxiety. "And pray, what is the complexion of this unknown?" "A clear brown, with light brown hair." "Ruddy or pale?" "Rather pale; and apparently of delicate health." "Describe the rest of his countenance." "Very large, dark, expressive eyes, with a singular mark, like a mole, in one eye; and a large mole on his left cheek." "Are you sure, Susan, of the mole on the left cheek?" "Yes; I am quite sure of it, Lady Alice; I have observed it several times very particularly when he has made me sit by his side."

Alice now became still more pacified. Huntley had no mole on either cheek. Yet in this person's likeness to Huntley,

at least at a distance, she could not be deceived. His air and gesture, and even the tones of his voice, as far as she could catch them, were strikingly alike.

Alice's curiosity was yet very strong; though the agonizing suspicions, with which it had at first been attended, had nearly vanished. She now left Susan to tell her story in her own way.

"About a month ago," said Susan, "I went with a party of our young neighbours here to the fair at *Norton-Berkeley*. We were all parading the great street in the centre of the town; when we heard a loud trampling at the end of the street, and there came up, on a gentle trot, a cavalcade of horsemen, gentlemen, and servants, in their hunting dresses, followed by a number of stray hounds. Men and horses looked a good deal fatigued, and as if they had had a long chase. They drew up into a walk, through the town, and looked leisurely among the people, especially among the

young women, that were gathered together on that occasion.

"The person, who rode first, and seemed to be of the most importance of all the company, wore in his hat a blue feather, tipped broadly with white; and all the servants wore a light blue livery, turned up with a white facing. Several of the party alighted from their horses, bought fairings, and presented them among such of the girls as they happened to fix upon, of those who were met there from the neighbouring parishes, to keep holiday.

"The gentleman with the blue feather came up to me, and offered me one of the richest trinkets he could find in the fair. I was so ashamed and distressed, and coloured so, I could not speak. The girls round me laughed at me, and mocked me, and cried "child!" and "baby!" and endeavoured to draw the gentleman's notice away from me. The more I blushed, and the more reluctant I seemed to take the

present, the more he pressed it upon me. He treated the giggling girls round me with a sort of proud indifference. He said to me, ' The losers laugh *this* time! I would have *you smile* that *win!*' I was still so confused that I hardly knew, at the moment, what he said, or how he looked.

" When he remounted his horse, and took his leave, lifting his blue-feathered hat with a graceful air, and bowing to me with a smile, I shall never forget, my senses seemed to return to me, and I looked after him with wistful eyes, as in pursuit of a vanished divinity.

" The girls all gathered round me, and behaved to me with such rudeness, that I burst into tears. I saw my father, and ran to him, and begged that we might walk home alone, for the girls did not use me kindly. My father was always very fond of me, and partial to me, and he had the goodness to say flattering things, which I cannot repeat.

"What did he say?" cried Alice.—'Oh! only a father's prejudice,—'that I was prettier than them all: and that that made them so rude to me.'

"My father granted my request; and we walked home by ourselves. I shall never forget that walk. My father did not interrupt me by talking; and I seemed to tread on air. I now recollected the gentleman's countenance, and ll his expressions, and would have given worlds to have seen him again. A thrilling came over my whole frame: a sense of inexpressible happiness in existence, as if all nature were turned into a paradise.

"As we approached the dear park-paling here, my father heard a stray hound a few yards off, within the pales. He jumped over the fence, and desired me to make my way home, alone, as fast as I could. I had not proceeded half a quarter of a mile, before I distinguished the trample of horsemen behind me.

They were not yet in sight. I then plainly heard a voice cry, 'Make haste, or you will be benighted at the castle. I shall sleep at the hither edge of the Wolds, at the vicar of Areley's!' I had at this moment reached the turn to the right, which quits the great road: I struck down it with as much haste as I could.

"In a few seconds, I heard a horseman behind me: I looked back; it was the horseman of the blue-feathered cap. I trembled so, I could scarcely support myself. He said to me, 'What! alone sweet girl?—So much beauty—and alone!' I answered, 'that my father had just left me, to get off a stray hound, that was disturbing the park.' He replied, 'I am afraid the fault is mine. It is, I suspect, one of my dogs. But the fault is a lucky one, if it gives me the opportunity of addressing you when alone!'

"The word '*alone*' filled me for a mo-

ment with trepidation; but I soon recovered from that dread. There was a gentleness and politeness in his manner, that assured me he could mean no ill.

"He alighted from his horse, and took my hand. I endeavoured to withdraw it; but he grasped it fast, and put it to his lips.

"He asked me, if this was not the Park of *Hardingville*. I told him, that it was; and that my father was one of the keepers. He asked after the health of Sir Oliver Berkeley. 'It is a noble family,' said he; 'in spite of clouds and storms, may it last for ever!'

"The sun had not yet descended; it was hanging over the farthest ivyed tower of the hall; and the golden vane on one of its pinnacles yet glittered in its yellow beams. 'How is the aged knight?' said he; 'and how is his beautiful daughter, the Lady Alice?' I said, that the knight was bowed with age and troubles; but that the Lady

Alice shone in all the double radiance of goodness and of beauty.

" He again seized my hand ; he would not let me go forward ; he said to me, ' You speak nobly of the Lady Alice ; whence did you get that sort of expression ?' I knew not what answer to make him. I would, if I had dared, have told him, that, if I had any phrase above my station, I had learned it from you.

" I walked forward ; he led his horse by my side. The stepping-stile of that part of the park came in sight. The smoke from my father's thatched lodge within it ascended sweetly to the sky. ' Good night, Sir,' I said to him with a heaving, but half-sorrowful heart.— ' *Good night!*' he answered with surprise, ' lovely one ! Is that then your home ?' — I answered, faintly, that it was. At that moment, I wished it had been farther distant. He put his arms round me : I struggled to get away. He put

his lips to my cheek : I darted off, not knowing what I did, and found myself on my mother's neck.

" 'What frightens my Susan?' said my mother. I half falsified, and exclaimed, 'A strange man frightened me, and I fled!' My mother answered, 'Ah! Susan, that face will ruin thee. Thou didst right, my love, to fly.' I hid my face in her bosom, and wept. I was ashamed of my own deceit; I felt that I had been a fool to fly; and I would have given back my precious trinket, and a thousand such, to be back at the spot whence I had fled.

" I made fatigue an excuse for going instantly to my bed. I could not sleep; a feverish delirium seized me; the figure of the blue-feathered horseman was before me; I was up with the dawn, and strolled about the park, drenched with the earliest dews.

" I returned to breakfast, exhausted and unhappy. My mother said, 'Susan, you look pale: I hope you have not lost

your heart at the fair.' I affected to laugh off this question: I replied, 'Mother, the conversation of the Lady Alice has taught me to be too nice for these rustic neighbours of ours.'

"My father was hard at work; he was resolved, in his task of wood-cutting, to make up the loss of time of the preceding day. My mother sent me with a basket of refreshments for him. I sat by his side for more than two hours, while the swing of his axe did vigorous execution. The freshness of smells arising from the disturbed soil, and disturbed vegetation, gave a revival and impulse to my senses. My father required my presence no longer; I set off home with my accustomed agility.

"The tongue of an hound opened in the quarter where my father had the day before leaped over the fence; that sound renewed again the memory of all that had passed; and a soft melancholy resumed possession of me.

CHAP. VII.

SUSAN'S NARRATIVE CONTINUED.

"I HAD arrived within a little distance of my home, when I was met by a young man, in whom I immediately recognized the blue-feathered figure of yesterday. His dress was changed: he was in a simple green coat, with a plain hunting-hat. He said to me, 'You fled from me yesterday: you have forced me to pay you another visit, that I may make it up with you to-day.'

"This extraordinary attention and flattery, from one so much my superior, overcame me. I coloured sadly; and looked very awkward; and could not keep the tears from covering my eyes. He did not triumph over my distress; but spoke gently to me, and encouraged

me. But I own I could not gain my ease before him; and only thought of his addresses with pleasure, when he was gone from me.

" I intreated him to leave me. I said, that my mother would be angry; and that my father was coming. He appeared anxious to avoid an interview with my father. He said, he did not like to be suspected of trenching upon the domains of Sir Oliver Berkeley, especially in his old age and troubles; and that he should be sorry to be rude to my father, and yet sorry to put up with any rudeness.

" Voices were heard in the valley. I assured him, that one of them was my father's. He seemed doubtful what to do: he was unwilling to leave me. I again implored him to depart. He obeyed my request mournfully.

" When he left me, I was very unhappy. Every thing around me appeared insipid to me. Hitherto I had loved my

father's talk, and my mother's talk, and the talk of my brothers and sisters. They now appeared coarse and harsh to me, and put me out of temper.

" A fortnight passed; and Fitz-Edmund, (for so he told me to call him,) appeared no more. If it had not been for your kind countenance and conversation, Lady Alice, I should then have died of gloom and vexation. You taught me to reconcile my mind to my feelings; you taught me to make melancholy delightful, and remembrance luxurious. You taught me to forget in tender songs the sting of absence, and the doubt of affection. You taught me, by the beautiful poetry you repeated to me, to believe that a pastoral life was comparatively neither unhappy or undignified.

" I then began to prize the blessings among which Providence had placed me. I began to think, that canopies of state could feebly rival the star-clad vault of heaven; and that the richest carpets

could not vie with the grassy coverings of the meadow and the down.

" Oh! in that intense, and spirit-stirring fortnight, what an age did I advance! I was sitting on the brow, that overlooks the deep gorge of *Stephen's Heap*; the torrent was falling through a rocky chasm, with a lulling noise, into the bottom; my fancy had dominion over me, and I was transported into such regions as poetry describes; my senses were wrapped up in the visions of my brain, when I heard a footstep, and saw Fitz-Edmund stand before me!

" I felt extreme alarm; I was agitated, ashamed, delighted. He attempted to take my hand: I withdrew it: an unconquerable diffidence made me retire, from him whom my soul adored. I said to him: 'Leave me in the obscurity in which you found me! I have been happy: do not endeavour to make me discontented with the lot in which Providence has placed me!'

"He told me, that he was tired of courts, and palaces, and castles; and that he had determined to seek for beauty, and virtue in cottages, and woods, and forests; that, when he saw me at the fair of Norton-Berkeley, he exclaimed to himself, that his hopes were about to be realised, and that all he had since seen of me more than realised those expectations.

"I recalled to my mind all that I had heard of the deceitfulness of men; of the interested and hollow flattery of the great; of the female victims, who had fallen sacrifices to the momentary pleasures of the profligate. I called the courage of virtue to my aid; and, for a moment, I fixed my eye steadily on the expression of Fitz-Edmund.

"There was a mildness in his look; an unpretending soft anxiety, from which I drew back my enquiring glances, as if I had committed an ungenerous treason. There was a sort of feverish alternation

of colour and pallidness in Fitz-Edmund's cheeks, which seemed to say, that his mind or his health had been over-tried.

" In that agitating and deeply-shaded interview, little was spoken: but he sat an hour or more by my side; and then my soul received those impressions, which, while it inhabits this earthly frame, can never be erased.

" I know not yet his history, his rank, his real name. I am sure that his disposition, his temper, and his spirit, are noble; and that, if true nobility consists of those qualities, he ought to be at the head of the titled and the high.

" He took no advantage of my humbleness; he treated me with a respect, as if I had been more than his equal; and the more distressed, and the more awkward I seemed, the more he encouraged and soothed me.

" I was fearful of my expressions; and I never used more words than were ab-

solutely necessary to avoid incivility. I chose the best words I could recollect, because my heart panted to be thought well of by him. He looked sometimes into my face with surprise, and asked me, whence I could have learned such language.

"I said to him, with smiles, covered with tears of gratitude, that in the last few months I had found a kind mistress, who could make trees and stones speak! 'Ah!' said he with glowing exultation, 'I know it well: it is the Divinity of these sylvan solitudes; it is the Lady Alice Berkeley!' He clasped me in his arms; he cried fervently, 'Heaven bless her!' and we wept together tears of gratitude and admiration."

Alice started. She looked red, and then pale. She put her hand to her eyes. She exclaimed: 'Mercy, Susan! O, Mercy! O, gracious Heaven! what can this mean?' She trembled; she put her hand upon Susan's: it was in a

flame: she cast a wild wondering glance at Susan's face. She cried in a hurried, half-inarticulate manner: 'Who then can Fitz-Edmund possibly be?'

"Perhaps, Lady Alice," continued Susan, "you may guess better than I can, when I have related a few more circumstances. The moment arrived, when it became prudent for us to part. Fitz-Edmund said, that he loved me; and I could not suppress in my heart the presumption to believe him. But I did not tell him so. I told him, that I was too humble for him, and I intreated him to leave me in peace.

"He tore himself from me, vowing that he must soon see me again: and I went home to reflect upon what had passed. My mother had prepared for my father, with more than common care, a supper of favourite vegetables, that the young spring had thrown forth from our little garden; she thought that he had lately fatigued himself by hard work,

and she was willing to revive his strength and spirits by this affectionate attention. She saw that I looked pale, and she fancied me ill, and pressed me to partake of these delicacies with the kindest earnestness. I sat by my father's side: the sun, that had shone with unclouded splendour through the day, was throwing his parting beams on our casement; the last evening notes of the early birds were dying away among the half-opened leaves of the surrounding forest; to me, it was an hour of inexpressible esctasy of frame, rendered still more intense by a shade of pensive anxiety and regret.

" My father said to me, ' Susan, you have not forgot the fair of Norton-Berkeley!' I answered with a forced smile: ' Father, I cannot forget it, for you remember what a pretty fairing I had from the blue-feathered horseman!' ' I remember it well, love!' he replied: ' and I remember how the rude girls envied and mocked you for it! I must needs

own, that my old heart swelled to see *my own girl* bear away the prize, from the best of the party! and a jolly party they were, Susan! But I cannot yet learn whence they came. I heard the huntsman say, that they had had a run of nearly fifty miles an end; and that the first in the chase, as he was the first and best in every thing, was his young lord.'

" O, how my heart danced at those words! O, thought I to myself, and perhaps it is that young lord that loves, or says he loves, your Susan. 'My father,' I whispered to myself, 'you are proud of your child. How proud would you be, could I disclose to you all that he has said to me!' I looked in the face of my father and my mother. My happiness did not make me vain, much less insolent: I loved them a thousand times better than ever. As I felt exalted in my own eyes, I imagined that I should be exalted in theirs, and that the exaltation would be reflected and mutual.

" I went to bed, and dreamed all night of my happiness. I rose, and when I came forth to inhale the genial breath of morning, and to behold the smiling face of nature under the glowing light of the orient day, I fell upon my knees in humble and ineffable gratitude for my blessed lot in existence, while the rolling tears of joy, and benevolence, and love, coursed each other down my cheeks.

" My father said to me, when he came home to dinner that day, that he had just been informed, that the strange party who returned through the fair at Norton-Berkeley were Sir Ambrose Grey's men, but that he was quite sure it was a mistake, for he had observed them narrowly; and he had had occasion for twenty years to be sure, by certain marks, of Sir Ambrose Grey's men. This occasioned him to let out a secret, which I had never hitherto heard him allude to. He told me that, when he had first committed to him the charge of one of the

under-keepers, one of the first instructions given him was, to be privately, and without ever talking of it, on the watch against Sir Ambrose Grey's men. If it was suspected that their marks were known, it was believed that they would change them.

"He told me, that Sir Ambrose Grey's men were supposed to have a peculiar passion for the game, and the herds of Hardingville; that they were remarkable for being mounted with the fleetest horses; that all the Hardingville keepers had a firm conviction, that they often rode fifty miles and back in a night, for the purpose of doing, under various disguises, what often seemed to be wanton mischief in the Park of Hardingville.

"They were remarkably agile, bold men, in the highest degree skilful in every artifice of the chace, and were accused of having little restraint as to any act of violence or wickedness. Their cunning was so great, and their disguises

so well supported, that they had never been caught in the fact. But there was not a keeper among them, who had any doubt in his own mind, when he saw one of their set; though, as he could not prove it, he never dared openly say so. If he did, he was sure to be pursued to his ruin.

" He assured me, that he had often seen Sir Ambrose himself in the Park some years ago, when younger, but that his disguise was so adroitly managed, and his assumed character so perfectly supported, that he dared not challenge him."

Alice here expressed her great surprise at this part of Susan's narration. She coloured, and looked angry. " Susan," she exclaimed, " I do not doubt that what your father has told you, he believes: but really this *must be* country gossip and scandal. It is quite impossible that any part of what you say of Sir Ambrose Grey can be true. I know, to my sorrow,

that the Berkeleys and Greys have always been at enmity; but I believe Sir Ambrose Grey a very brave, polished, honourable man, and very much scandalized. Once, in a frolic, the Lord Dacre robbed in the Park of Sir Thomas Pelham, and was most cruelly and vindictively hanged for it; but a system of rapine and wicked violence no man of family could pursue."

"O Lady Alice, forgive me!" said Susan, "I know nothing of the Greys, but that I have understood them to hate the House of Hardingville, and all its connections and retainers. Do not be angry with me, therefore, for thinking ill of them; and hating them as they hate us."

"Do they hate us then, Susan?" cried Alice, "do they hate us? Are you sure that they hate us? I would that they were belied on that point. They must be belied! *I* will believe that they are belied, and do you, good girl, believe so too!"

Alice was now so agitated and fatigued,

that she desired Susan to defer the remainder of her narrative till another day. She was so faint that she requested Susan to walk back with her part of the way to the Hall. As she passed over the summit of the hill, behind which the mansion lay, she saw again at a distance the figure, which reminded her of Huntley. It had his very step; the form of the head and shoulders; the air of the whole person.

It seemed as if Susan did not observe this figure, and Alice could not bring herself to point it out to her. There was a mystery in this affair, which still produced great uneasiness in her heart. If, indeed, there was no identity, one mortifying reflection occurred to her, "Why is Susan more fortunate than I am? Her lover comes to her. Why comes not Huntley to me?"

CHAP. VIII.

CONCLUSION OF SUSAN'S NARRATIVE.

SUSAN had walked but a few yards after quitting Alice, when Fitz-Edmund joined her. But it will be necessary to resume the narrative, where Susan left it.

" At Fitz-Edmund's next visit to me," she said, " he complained that he had been strangely watched, and interrupted during the morning. That one of the keepers had, at last, spoke to him ; examined earnestly his looks, and his dress ; put some questions to him, which he did not understand ; observed his hands ; even touched the mole in his face ; and at last said, ' You may pass, Sir. I trust, you will do no harm here.' He added, ' how gladly and meekly, Susan, do I bear all this, to be blest with the sight of you !'

" I could not help smiling. I said to him, 'They took you for one of Sir Ambrose Grey's men.' Excuse me, Lady Alice, for saying so. I am only relating what was *then* in my mind; not my present thoughts on the subject. 'And what of Sir Ambrose Grey's men?' he answered hastily. 'It is said that they are fond of their night marauders,' I replied. 'Impossible!' he cried. 'Sir Ambrose Grey's family has moved too much in the sphere of honour to admit such a stain.' 'Well, then, but Sir Ambrose Grey's family does not love the house of Hardingville,' I continued.

" 'I have heard,' said he, 'that there have been old feuds that had better be forgotten.' — 'It is not easy to forget,' said I, 'what is inhaled with the first breath; what is nursed among all the retainers; and what the very trees whisper; and the battlements themselves shriek out.' 'And would you retain it?' — 'I am afraid I should, unless my

divine young mistress, the Lady Alice, should teach me better. Perhaps she would teach me more love and forgiveness; for she always talks of anger and family resentment with abhorrence."

"But without such a tutor, is your imbibed resentment, Susan, proof against love?" He looked steadily at me. I feared that what I said had given him an unfavourable impression of my disposition. I strove to smile. I said to him, with a forced archness, "You know it is a Berkeley that we serve. I must answer you as poetry would answer:

"Burns with one love, with one resentment glows!"

He complimented me on my answer. He said, what made me blush, that I had caught from you the language of courts. "But what says the Lady Alice of the family of Grey?" continued he.—"She says, that they are a noble family; and she weeps when she talks of the hereditary prejudice against them."

" In what way can she have heard any thing about them, separated, as they have always been, in connections and society?"

" She has spent much of her time at Mr. Barney's parsonage, close to Cheeveley, and there she heard much about them from young Mr. Huntley, who was her play-fellow."

" And who is Mr. Huntley?" — " He is reported to be (excuse me, Lady Alice, for what I said) the natural son of Sir Ambrose Grey." " Can he really be so?" cried he. I answered, that " If fame be true, he is very unlike him in disposition?"

" But if he be, or be supposed to be, a son of Sir Ambrose Grey," he went on, " I presume, from what you tell me, that he is excluded from Hardingville." I replied, that " I knew not, that I had ever seen him at Hardingville."

" He paused, and then proceeded thus: " Susan, I wish not, impertinently, to pry into secrets; but merely to enquire about rumours. Is it not said, that

the Lady Alice has an attachment to Huntley?" I answered, "The rumour is in favour of another person — the gentleman who so faithfully attended Sir Oliver Berkeley to London, in his misfortunes."

Neither Susan, nor any of the retinue of Hardingville, knew that this was Huntley, who, as a *protegé* of Sir Ambrose Grey, had carefully concealed his name here.

Alice here cried out, "Susan, you spoke discreetly: to be in love with a man merely because he honourably and generously attends a father in misfortune, may not be possible. Such conduct, at least, secures warm and permanent gratitude."

Alice had now heard enough to enflame her curiosity, and set her fancy to work. Whoever this young man might be, she was not surprised at his admiration of Susan. Susan was, in Alice's eyes, as beautiful as imagination could

draw. The progress she had made in sentiment, and in refinement of manners, during the month or two she had been under her protection and tuition, was wonderful. Nor was she less delighted with her isposition, and her good sense.

But Alice could scarcely avoid reflecting, that there must be something in this attachment of the stranger which connected itself with her own fate, as well as with Susan's. Fitz-Edmund's questions and allusions seemed so often to be pointed to the more immediate members of the house of Hardingville, that it could hardly be mere curiosity, or accidental association.

Now and then she would have supposed Fitz-Edmund to be one of the family of Grey itself. But there were great difficulties in the way of this supposition. He seemed, indeed, to be touched at the bad fame of Sir Ambrose Grey; but the reputation of Sir Ambrose had always stood separated from that of the

family. To speak of the house of Hardingville with the kindness with which Fitz-Edmund spoke of them, was quite inconsistent with the rooted and indestructible prejudices of the race of Greys.

"Go on with your narrative, Susan," said Alice; "perhaps I may form a better guess about Fitz-Edmund from what you may yet have to relate." Susan went on thus:

"That interview was the least pleasant of those which I have had with Fitz-Edmund. His pride seemed a little touched; and I feared that he thought more of himself and less of me. He told me, that I had an extraordinary likeness, in face, to a lady he once knew intimately, (and then he sighed,) whose rank was very different from mine; but whose rank was her bane. He appeared to have an inclination to say more on this subject, when a hectic colour flushed in his face; a tear started in his eye;

and he sat for nearly ten minutes in a profound reverie.

"He left me; and I began, when he was gone, to imagine that I had now lost the lover who had taken possession of every movement of my heart. I lamented this interruption of the keeper, who appeared to have given him offence. I could not believe the story about Sir Ambrose Grey's people, and thought it a silly and ignorant suspicion; but to suppose that Sir Ambrose Grey's people, if they deserved such a character, and if they had such objects in view, would be headed by a man of the appearance and manners of Fitz-Edmund, and would be seen, in open day, riding, accoutred as they were, through the fair of Norton-Berkeley, was, in my opinion, far too improbable and absurd to deserve credence.

"You will wonder, Lady Alice, that I said nothing of all this to you, while it was passing; but one of the first promises that Fitz-Edmund extorted from me, after

he had gained any influence over my bosom, was not to describe him or mention him to you.

" I dare say you saw how altered my countenance was, and how much more grave my spirits had become, about that time. When the first transports of this delirious passion began to give way a little to reflection, it was shaded by the intermixture of much anxiety and bitterness. The felicity I experience at the moments which I spend with Fitz-Edmund, is sometimes too strongly contrasted with the coarser duties to which my station in life condemns me.

" Nor is it, indeed, except at moments when a radiant sunshine illumines my breast, that I dare hope that I can, at last, enjoy that destiny to which I admit that I have no pretensions; but which, now that the passion has, without my seeking, been so unexpectedly excited in me, can alone make life worth having.

"Fitz-Edmund had returned to me, Lady Alice, the day when you heard that part of our discourse which has given occasion to the present relation to you. He was in a mood full of tenderness and fancy; but very melancholy. He said, that pomp and show were but empty things, of little efficacy to produce happiness; that at too early a period he had seen too much of the world; and that he was sometimes weary of life. He often, he said, felt within him the sinkings of premature decay; the springs of existence seemed to relax, and to whisper to him, that his race was short, and the green grass would soon wave, or rather the cold marble sit heavy, over his remains. "Perhaps," said he, "unless I could make you happy, Susan, it matters not. This anxiety for the continuance of a name; this fretting after titles and inheritances: — is it not a feverish and empty dream? We prolong, perhaps, a little while to

end in folly or disgrace; to subject it to despoilments and disinherisons; to exalt it only when it is mean and corrupt; to cover it with insult or neglect, if it has genius; with revenge and ruin, if it has ambition. O my poor brain!" he went on; "they think me placid, and languid, and indifferent. O my heart beats! my burning pulse throbs! visions of futurity spare my aching eyes!"

"I dared to look upon his beaming countenance; it shone in a glorious sort of light, chastised by sorrow, and cast upon me the influence of a diviner nature. I was more inclined to bend upon my knees before him than to aspire to sympathy with such eloquence and noble sensibility. I trembled; and was overawed, and overcome.

"He praised my simplicity and modesty. He said, that I had received this burst of a diseased and overswelling mind as became the disposition he attributed to me. He now talked with more

flattering affection to me; and he had just repeated those too tender words,

"Come, live with me, and be my love!"

when I was called to you by the incident which you recollect.

"I have since seen him once, which happened on the morning you last parted from me. The little, which then took place in our conversation, I am incapable of giving any intelligible meaning to. Futurity may, perhaps, develope it."

CHAP. IX.

WHAT ENCOURAGEMENT SIR AMBROSE'S SCHEME OF MARRYING HUNTLEY TO MARGARET GREY MEETS WITH AT WOLSTENHOLME.—TRAITS IN THE CHARACTERS OF LORD GREY AND GILES GREY.

After the conversation, which had taken place between Lord Grey and his son Giles, as to Margaret Grey's supposed encouragement of Huntley, and the suspicion that Sir Ambrose Grey countenanced it, more than a week elapsed; during which, all the parties seemed to rest upon the views, whatever they were, which each had adopted.

Huntley's health was yet very precarious; he could bear no exercise; he could not bear any thing which agitated or strongly employed his thoughts, without frightful torments to his head. The

whole house began to think his recovery doubtful.

Sir Ambrose made a journey to Hellingsley, on purpose to endeavour to discover the prepetrators of the outrage, by which Huntley was thus suffering. He went to Cheeveley; and he even brought himself to converse with Mr. Barney, to whom he had not spoken for many years. The whole circumstances were enveloped in a mystery, which he could not unravel. Stories were industriously circulated to throw the blame on Huntley; but, luckily for Huntley, they all disproved themselves.

Sir Ambrose was a man who gained little pity in a case of this kind; he ad the character of so much hardness and violence himself, that when an injury happened to one of his own connections, it seemed no more than a retaliation. But Huntley was respected. Had he been under any other protection than that of Sir Ambrose, he would have been adored.

The general belief was, that this injury had proceeded from Sim, the gypsey; but it was always observed, that the gypsies were a tribe of whom Sir Ambrose stood in awe.

Sir Ambrose was a man who held a mingled and doubtful influence over the neighbourhood, of the strangest kind. His name, his alliances, his own personal vigour of body and mind, the various manly amusements in which he excelled, the acuteness and decision of his understanding, all gave him a command over those who fill up the ranks of society. But tales of his tyranny, his dissoluteness, and his unsparing pursuit of his own gratifications, incessantly renewed as often as contradicted, always lessened his power, and were continually tending to turn respect into indignation and hatred.

Sir Ambrose here learned something of Huntley's attachment to Alice Berkeley. He heard her character, and admired it; but his hereditary and personal preju-

dices made him dislike the connection; and the present condition of the fortune of Sir Oliver Berkeley, added to his desire to put an end to it.

He returned to Wolstenholme, and found Huntley still weak, feverish, and unhappy. To Huntley, only, of all human beings, he seemed to have an affection paramount to his fierceness. He would not, therefore, at present mention the subject of Alice Berkeley.

Margaret Grey's attentions to Huntley grew, every day, more anxious. Her uncle thought it most advisable to leave these to work their effect. The less disturbed, the more, at least, Margaret would be caught in the net.

The eyes of the whole family, however, were now watchful upon this subject. Many attempts were made to question Sir Ambrose as to the birth of Huntley. He always affected not to understand any indirect questions; and once or twice, when the courage was

assumed to ask direct ones, he quashed them by sallies of the most intemperate resentment.

Lord Grey felt his resolution and decision peculiarly fail under the present circumstances. He had never been very capable of facing his brother Sir Ambrose. A dominion early acquired, and submitted to, is seldom shaken off in age. It must not be inferred from hence, that Sir Ambrose's understanding was better than Lord Grey's. It was a matter of temper and animal spirits, not of intellect. Lord Grey was the representative of a family of heroes; and, when in the field, had shown in himself all their gallantry of spirit. His pliability of disposition had been a great bar to that possession of political and provincial power and splendour which his house had, at various periods, enjoyed; and which, if he sometimes forgot, he was at other times mortified at the loss of.

It was neither in his nature, nor in his

principles, to lay the least kind of plot; to use the least degree of management in the conduct of his affairs, public or private. He was almost always, therefore, defeated even by the most stupid and imbecile, whenever any thing came into contest. It is not talent or wisdom which wins the day in any course: it is art, intrigue, subterfuge, falsehood, backbiting; not the power of open argument, but the insinuation of secret misrepresentation. A man may be defeated in plain and visible conflict, day after day, and year after year; he sneaks privately out of the field, and has the prize allotted to him behind his antagonist's back, in right of a stab in the dark, which he would make the world believe to have been given in fair fighting.

With all these defects of worldly craft on the part of the chief, the character of the feudal times was not yet so far changed as to let such a family as that of the Lord Grey totally decline from their

height, and lose all their consideration. In those days a great family was, like the oak of the forest, a work of centuries; and if it required the nutriment of ages, the fostering suns and showers of five hundred years, to bring it to its due expansion and elevation, it took nearly as much of blights and tempests to strip its foliage, to wrest off its arms, to whirl its high top a broken fragment upon the ground; and even then, its gnarled and knotted trunk, leafless and moss-covered, continued for generations to mock the winds and the lightnings.

Where are now such families as these? Who are now the great? Creatures of mushroom vegetation; the growth of the nutriment of the hot-beds made from the filth and corruption of the metropolis. Bloomy and swelling without; mean and rotten within; the first wind that shakes off their heartless and artificial verdure, blows them into dust, and returns them to their own foul and empty nothingness.

"Of what value," it will be said, "were these monopolizers of birth; these men who shut the door against the self-aggrandiser, against the worth of personal merit,—the stimulus of individual exertion?" The value was, that this protection and privilege given to birth, left men to be *good*, and at the same time to be *great*. It united, what, in a new man, can scarcely be united, goodness and greatness. He who is content with virtue, must now be content to live in obscurity. He cannot edge his way among men, and elbow himself into distinction by virtue.

If we wander through the kingdom with prying eyes, we shall still find, perhaps, scattered among obscure woods, and remote, half-savage, vallies, a twisted, tough, forlorn branch, shooting out from these old roots; but, perhaps, it is their obscurity that preserves them. The axe of the new men, if they were noticed, would soon destroy them by violence,

and apply the spade, and the gunpowder to their obstinate stocks.

It never entered Lord Grey's head; that a family of such durability was in danger of distinction or decay. Its younger branches, indeed, were not very flourishing. They relied too much on the nutriment of the trunk; they gave too much cofidence to the force of their name, and thought that relationship could never be forgotten! *Forgotten!* why it is forgotten in *very brothers,* who will leave each other to starve, or tear each other asunder *for the sake of a little pelf!! Forgotten!* when brotherhood itself, in the mere coldness of the heart, neglects all communication, knows nothing of each other's motions, and is often even uncertain of each other's existence!

O! amiable, but falsely-lulled Lord Grey! O! dreamer of deluding, and not-to-be-fulfilled dreams! O! gazer on a glass, on which the dancing images of

futurity were veiled in deceitful colours! Thy castle has long fallen! Wolstenholme is no more! Thy bones have mingled with the air; not a stone to cover them; not a turf to spring over them! Not a roof on thy once richly-vaulted Halls! The pannel, that long preserved thy mild visage, has yielded to the furious flame! Thy titles resound there no more! The *blue armories*, the gorgeous shields of *bars* and *crosses*, and all the fantastic blazonry of heraldric achievement, have left not an atom of them behind!

Where now are the relics of thy race? Does the vigour of the purple current, that ran in thy veins, yet support them? Are they fallen, like thy towers, from their height? Yes; they are fallen! But does the wild remembrance of thy glory still hover round them? Do they catch at its parting shadows? Do they run in chace of it vanishing beams? Do the deeds of ancient times still sound in

their ears? Do they hang upon the tale of chivalry? and is the harp of the troubadour their delight?

SONNET.

When the night throws her mantle o'er the scene
  Where once thy towers their battlements raised high,
  And thine hall's gladness sounded to the sky;
  Poised in mid air, yon clouds, this earth between,
Methinks I see thine image, glistening sheen
  In form of vapoury spirit, hover nigh,
  Whispering upon the breeze thy tender sigh!
  Then with deep listening ear and pensive mien,
It murmurs: "All is silent; not a sound
  Breathes even from the grave; the spell is gone;
  The stones lie scatter'd in cold heaps around: —
'Tis o'er: — the work of final ruin's done!
  Rise, spark of fire unquench'd! from distance wake!
With lamp, that scorns to die, thy place 'mid tempests take!"

And thou, too, Giles Grey, the heir to this noble inheritance, and still nobler name; what wast thou doing?

Giles had too much of his father's pliability; but on a very attentive examination, it may be doubted, if it arose

altogether from the same causes. Giles had not recovered from the effects of the days he had spent with Prince Henry.

The prince was himself a youth of singular virtue, gallantry, generosity, and elevation of mind; but he lived in a court of extraordinary vice, and corruption. Of all Prince Henry's companions, Giles Grey was most like him, in disposition, and habits. His health was naturally good, but the early age at which he was plunged into a course of harassing amusements, the tilt, the tournament, the chase, the dance, the masque, broke in prematurely upon the strength of his constitution.

He had, before he was seventeen years old, formed a romantic attachment to a beautiful young lady, of high rank in the court, which he had not imparted, even to Prince Henry, because she belonged to a family to which his father had always expressed the greatest repugnance; on which account he well knew, that the

Prince, who was acquainted with this rooted repugnance, would cause it to be broken off. Among the grounds of repugnance, was an opinion which Lord Grey had formed of the secret dissoluteness and abandoned principle of that family, arising out of some facts within his own observation, not, however, divulged by him.

Giles Grey had become wildly enamoured, almost before he had had time to reflect. The lady had a most beautiful countenance, pre-eminently distinguished by its simplicity and softness. Giles had not spoken to her three times, before he persuaded himself to forget all he had heard of prejudice against this family from his father. At any rate, he conceived that the father's faults, whatever they might be, should not be visited upon the daughter.

Her father was a man of the greatest ambition; and intrigue at court. He was very ambitious of the best alliances for

all his children, and was much pleased with Giles Grey's notice; but such was his habit of secrecy, that he industriously encouraged it, without appearing to any one to see it.

He was a man, who, though not in the confidence of Prince Henry, was placed by King James about him, and had much of the conduct of the arrangements of his household.

Giles was far advanced in his attachment and his vows; his whole happiness seemed to be placed on his future union with her, when a singular accident discovered to him a secret intimacy between her and the prince.

In his first disappointment, rage, and horror, he suspected that the prince had acted with treachery to him. He withdrew himself from the court, only affording time to be satisfied that the prince had never known of his attachment.

But the shock it gave to his constitution, the degree to which it had enerv-

ated and enfeebled his whole mind, had never yet been recovered. It had not indeed effaced all the romantic impressions of his nature; it had not extinguished his love of his family, his admiration of the high principles of chivalry, his sensibility to the charms of beauty, or his desire of glory: but it had made them less enduring and steady, they blazed, and were dark again; they gave but an intermittent light.

This probably was the cause, why Giles could seldom bring himself to act with any permanent resolution. After he had decided, he began to doubt; after he had formed schemes, he began to hesitate, lest something should be behind.

In this state of vacillation, he was often rather willing to let things take their course, than run the hazard of committing an error, by giving them an impulse of his own.

He was not in a state of health to battle with the furious conduct, or deep

management, of his uncle, Sir Ambrose. Huntley was one whom he loved, and whom, if his doubtful birth had not been in the way, he would have approved. His sister Margaret was not a beauty, and had not any great chance of making an advantageous match.

CHAP. X.

At this crisis, Mr. Browne, the gentleman whom Huntley met at Mr. Scudamore's at Hellingsley, came on a visit to Wolstenholme. Huntley was surprised; he had never seen him there before, nor had ever heard his name mentioned there. Sir Ambrose introduced him as a guest of his own; and as this was a practice he commonly exercised, no notice was taken of it.

Huntley had a great dislike to Browne; but he, like all the rest of the house, stood in sufficient terror of Sir Ambrose not to be rude to any one, who stood on *his* introduction.

Browne, with his usual talent, made himself very agreeable on that day, and engaged the full attention both of the

lord of the castle and of his heir. He opened his whole store of anecdotes, and all the copious and interesting information of an eventful life. He behaved with the utmost courtesy to Huntley, and endeavoured to re-establish himself in his good opinion. To Sir Ambrose Grey alone he was not merely civil, but almost obsequious. Yet, in cultivation of mind, in copiousness, quickness, and extent of talent, he was far superior to Sir Ambrose.

To Margaret Grey he behaved with an insinuating address, with which she was very much struck. While he was exerting these attentions, he closely, but secretly, watched the countenance of Huntley, and was mortified to find that it did not pique him.

In the course of a week, Browne was as familiar at Wolstenholme, as if he had lived there all his life. He knew every character; its strength, its weakness, its accidental propensities.

He soon found what were Sir Ambrose's wishes and schemes with regard to Huntley. He resolved to profit by them. He told Sir Ambrose, that, if he would leave it to him, he would manage the affair. He gave Sir Ambrose reasons, which made him still more anxious for this alliance, than he was before.

He said to him, "Young men are headstrong: they must be coaxed, and wheedled; neither goaded nor dragged on by force. Give me leave to use the line, the lure, and the bait, and I will manage it."

"Thou art the devil, Browne!" said Sir Ambrose; "and through many a pretty scheme hast thou carried me already. Take care, that the cloven foot does not betray itself at last, my gallant boy!"

Huntley was the more difficult to be dealt with at this time, because he was too weak to be angry; too dull to be flattered, and too sorrowful to be stimu-

lated by hope. It was upon the more malleable spirit of Margaret that Browne had a greater reliance.

He had admirable skill in judging of the exact extent, to which to excite her jealousy of Alice Berkeley. He played with this passion, alternately ridiculing and encouraging the idea of an attachment to Alice; sometimes calling in aid even the family rivalry: and when Margaret's inherited sense of the consequence of her house, rose in her way, and made her shrink from an alliance with an unknown, he insinuated that Huntley was Sir Ambrose's son, and even his legitimate son.

Margaret could now no longer struggle with her passion. The difficulty, which Browne had, was to bring Huntley to keep up even the appearance of civility to her. He knew that suggestions of interest would avail nothing; he knew that the threat of Sir Ambrose's displea-

sure would, in this case, only make him desperate.

He made an endeavour to lessen his affection for Alice, by some base calumnies of his own invention. He found that line of intrigue the most dangerous of all, because nothing but an accident prevented its driving him to fly direct to Alice herself.

Alice, indeed, was so unhappy at hearing nothing of him, that she had been impelled to write him a letter, which Browne had stopped in its progress. This very letter Browne had, indeed, at one time resolved to make use of by fragments, to prove Alice's infidelity, and rouse Huntley's jealousy against himself. He found that he did not dare; but he did enough to lay the seeds of future poison.

Sir Ambrose, by Browne's contrivances, now laid such nets round Huntley, that he could not get away from Wolstenholme. In the same way, Alice was

equally watched; and whenever she was at the parsonage, she could not stir from the house without having scrutinizing eyes upon her.

Margaret Grey found the anxiety she felt for the health of Huntley increase daily. In a remote feudal castle there is little to relieve a romantic mind from fixing on a single object. Huntley's melancholy and reserve did not deter her. There was in his character much food for her love; and Sir Ambrose and Browne inflamed it by every artifice.

Every contrivance was exercised to leave them alone with each other. When a scheme for a morning ride was formed, in which Sir Ambrose, Browne, and Huntley were of the party, with Margaret, Sir Ambrose and Browne often stole away in the middle of the forest, and left the lovers (if the word may be applied to both) to themselves.

It was, indeed, a noble forest, which they traversed in these rides. Its walks,

its allies, and its intricate recesses, could not easily be exhausted. The keeper's horns, that often echoed across the declivities, or ran shrilly down the vallies, often startled the ear; and, contrasting with the solemn, lonely murmur of the low wind among the leaves, roused Huntley sometimes from the reveries into which he was too much inclined to sink.

Margaret was an excellent and spirited horse-woman. The presence of Huntley animated her; and the air and exercise gave her a colour, and a sparkling expression, which made her at least transiently handsome. She had a great vivacity of mind; and partly by her own sagacity, and partly by the insinuations of Browne, knew the tone of conversation most likely to interest Huntley.

She assumed a lofty style of sentiment; constantly expressed a preference to the ages of chivalry; made allusions to the heroic traits in the history of her ancestors; talked with a generous contempt

of wealth; was indignant at the meanness that could desert rural and provincial dominion for the servility of courts; and spoke of personal valour, set off by personal attractions and generosity of heart, when in connection with feudal station, as the glory of society.

One of her favourite topics was to eulogise her brother; and when she had praised him, she gave Huntley to understand, yet with great address, the traits she had dwelt upon in this brother, exactly resembled him. "Oh! Huntley," she said, with an arch look, "how odd it is, that your nose, and your eyes, and so many of your looks, are so very like his! I protest, I begin to think you are a relation. Forgive me! don't look grave now. I know, you have the advantage of him in figure; but then, he is a *Grey* after all."

"Be sure, I love him the better for that," said Huntley.

"Oh! but those Berkeleys—those

Berkeleys!" she cried slyly, and with an affected archness.

"What of those Berkeleys?" replied Huntley, a little hastily.

She coloured and hesitated. "Only you know, Huntley, they do not love the house of Grey;" and then she fetched a deep sigh.

"Are you sure that this is not prejudice?" he exclaimed somewhat hastily.

"I only know what I have told," she answered, with difficulty restraining a tear; "but is not prejudice on the other side, Huntley? Will you candidly tell me that?"

"What other side? On the side of the Berkeleys?"

A pause — a word trembled on Margaret's lips: at last, she seemed to correct herself; and said, with hesitation, "Oh yes; yes; on the side of the Berkeleys."

"What do you know of the Berkeleys?" continued Huntley.

"Nothing!" she cried; "nothing, as

I said, but what I am told. That knowledge is with you, Huntley. You have lived nearer to them; at least, to *some* of *them*."

"I see that you have got some gossip in your head, Margaret. What does this mean? Is it part of the whimsical talk of your new visitor, Mr. Browne?"

"O, no! I am sure, for his part, he loves these Berkeleys; he praises them up to the skies; at least, whenever I am alone with him. I should almost think that he was going to be married to one of them. But he has charged me, Huntley, not to repeat a word of these conversations to my uncle Sir Ambrose; for he says, that Sir Ambrose would immediately quarrel, and break with him, if he knew that he ever spoke to a Berkeley."

Huntley's whole countenance was in a flame, while Margaret was talking thus: "Curses on him!" he burst out:—"curses on him! he is a villain!"

"Ah, Huntley!" rejoined Margaret; "Ah, Huntley! why so violent?" Yet she could scarcely speak distinctly for the tears that choked her. "Why should *you* care if Mr. Browne should marry a Berkeley?"

"Because they are *too good* for such a wretch!" he said.

"Well, then," cried Margaret, resuming her spirit; for nature had given her a mighty spirit, "when a Grey defends a Berkeley; for you know," softening her voice at the words, "they declare you are really a Grey; it is over with poor Wolstenholme, round which evil omens have been croaking so long. A house divided against itself cannot last."

She burst into a flood of tears after this effort. Huntley endeavoured to soothe her; but each had put a dagger into the heart of the other.

Margaret soon put her horse upon a gallop; and as Huntley followed, increased her pace. She took her course

homeward, having three miles of the forest to pass before they could get out of it. She continued a fleet pace till she came to the last boundary of it. The road then lay through a narrow stony lane, and she drew up. Her horse was in a white foam. The horse of Huntley, who was not quite so well mounted, was ready to drop.

"You look as fatigued as your horse, Huntley," she cried, not yet quite recovered from her anger.

Huntley looked pale; but made no answer.

When they met at dinner, Margaret's eyes were swelled as if she had spent the whole interval in weeping. Huntley looked very grave; of a deadly paleness; and betrayed several times, at dinner, symptons of a writhing pain. At length there was a gush of blood from his forehead, and he retired.

Margaret fainted, or affected to faint. Indeed, she had reason for alarm; she

felt conscious that the speed with which the irritation of her temper had driven her home, had probably been the cause of the wound in Huntley's head breaking out afresh.

When she recovered, her first effort was, to enquire after him, and visit him. Sir Ambrose was watching over him with anxious looks; Giles Grey sat by his bed-side. He seemed in excruciating pain. He took but little notice of her. She sobbed audibly. Giles told her, in a tone of harshness unusual to him, to be silent, for that noise was death to Huntley.

She sunk upon a chair, and gave herself up to despondence. His groans pierced her heart; his eyes glared; the pain in his head had brought on a high fever. Giles beckoned to her to leave the room. She departed; and retiring to her own room, gave full vent to her sorrow.

CHAP. XI.

A NEW CHARACTER, HAL OF THE HALL, INTRODUCED.

Among the motley retinue of a feudal castle of those days, were numerous varieties of character. A very singular one, who had spent the greater part of his life at Wolstenholme, has not been yet mentioned, because he had been absent, during the former period of this narrative, in consequence of ill health.

A diminutive creature, whose height was not four feet, deformed, and feeble, but with a face not altogether unpleasing, and eyes of unusual brightness, had returned within a few days from the coast of Wales, somewhere near Caernarvon, whither he had been sent to breathe his native air, in the hope of recovering him from an apparently rapid decline.

He had come back with his health much restored, to dream his dreams, and behold his visions with new vigour; for he was a *Seer* and a *Poet*. He had taken the place of the Jester, who had been a necessary companion in many great houses. He was a being whom nature, though niggardly in the gifts of outward form, had endowed with a wild and fertile imagination, and a surprising command of appropriate and picturesque words. Whatever he produced was impromptu, or with little meditation; and it seemed his taste, as well as his business, to connect his mind with whatever was wonderful and mysterious. He had a vast influence over the minds of the common people, who related to him all their superstitions, and continually resorted to him for advice. He was accustomed to go out, especially in spring and autumn, and sit under favourite old oaks or elms, where benches had been put for him; and there he would listen to the

peasants, gypsies, and vagrants, who were accustomed to seek for his conversation.

Here he learned such of the gossip of the neighbourhood and the county, as he was willing to listen to, which served him often in his allusions, and warnings, when he was called upon, or saw occasion to exercise his talents at the Castle.

The peasant-girls flocked to him in numbers, believing that he could tell their fortunes, and enable them by some charm to secure the hearts of their lovers. They gathered for him the earliest flowers of the spring, and made wreaths to deck his hair. They brought him green fragrant boughs to shade him from the sun; and the softest and sweetest-smelling leaves to repose upon.

Here was the scene of his relaxation, the high delight to which he looked, the throne of his empire. He had an eye for female beauty, and a sympathy with its tender accents. Girls, in love, did not fear to breathe out their tales of

affection to him; and they caught from him now and then an eloquence of expression, which enabled them to exert a greater charm over those whom they were anxious to secure. He repeated to them scraps of poetry; and often composed, on the occasion, whole stanzas for their use. They sat by him, kissed his hand, brought him fruit, and all believed him inspired.

He had soon learned a great part of what had passed at the Castle during his absence. He had learned Margaret's attachment, and Huntley's character. There was yet much to develope, which the inmates of the house had not penetrated. This Mr. Browne, he could learn but little about, and he had a sort of dread of his first appearance.

In truth, the dwarf, with all this character for wisdom and knowledge, was easily deceived. He lived in a little creation of his own, with a very imperfect judgment of realities. He had,

besides, according to the custom of those days, such an exclusive veneration for the family, under whose patronage he lived, that he had no will or opinion of his own, where their interests or wishes were concerned.

Browne thought that such a person might be made an admirable instrument of his designs; he soon commenced his operations upon him; he found him at first less pliable than he expected. He had too much finesse for *Hal the Seer*, (for by that name he went.) Nor had he, with all his worldly cunning, an exact comprehension of Hal's character.

It was impossible to do any thing with Hal, unless by working upon his imagination, and making him believe in the truth and rectitude of what he undertook. Hal was an enthusiast; and never worked but under the impulse of zeal.

It was the primary feeling of Hal's mind, that Margaret degraded herself by her attachment to Huntley. He was

not fond of Sir Ambrose, who often called him *The Fool;* and had, therefore, no prejudices favourable to Huntley, who came as his *protegé.*

But when Huntley became dangerously ill, his sensibilities were awakened towards him. His mind became disturbed; and he dreamed mysterious dreams about him. He muttered to himself prayers for him; and some of these were overheard, and reported to Browne.

As he lay one morning under one of his accustomed oaks, when the air was quite still, and solitude and silence were around him, and not a human being to be seen, a low soft voice seemed to reach his ear, as if in a solemn chaunt, that cried:

"Hal of the Hall, listen to my warning!
Listen, ere it be too late!
The fate of all hangs trembling over the Castle.
The shields shake, and the blue bars tremble;
And the banners rustle, as if they would be rent:
When the bars and the crosses meet again,
Then is destruction to the House of Wolstenholme!

Hal of the Hall, take thy harp!
Hal of the Hall, do thy work!
And speak thy inspirations!
Speak, ere the hovering demon lights!
For then will the sword and the flame
Tumble down the proud walls
Of Wolstenholme, and its inhabitants;
And the ploughshare of ruin
Root up its foundations:
Then will Hal's vocation be up;
And his name descend blighted to the grave."

Then a soft instrument sounded; which was followed by the tremendous blast of a bugle, that made all the forest round him ring; and then all resumed a profound and frightful silence.

He looked, and saw a volume of clouds descend low, and overhang the Castle, touching almost its battlements. Then came a broad flash of lightning, and then a tremendous burst of thunder shook the very earth, and convulsed the whole atmosphere.

He was overwhelmed with fear, and sunk into a trance, in which he lay for at least two hours; not a human creature

being within reach of him. When he awoke, he was bewildered and gloomy; fearful and distressing images haunted him. He creeped back to the Castle as fast as his feebleness would allow; and found that every one had been alarmed at the extraordinary violence of the storm. "The old walls shook again," said one of the boldest of the keepers; "and there is a new rent in one of the towers. The staff of the great banner of the Grey and Berkeley arms, at the top of the hall, split, and the banner fell to the floor."

"Ah me! ah me!" said Hal, "some great misfortune overhangs this house. I have seen it in my trance; I have had warnings of it from voices in the air."

Old Lord Grey sat mournfully that day at the top of his table; the big tears rolled down his furrowed cheeks; his venerable white locks seemed disturbed by the tremulous perturbations of his

frame. Sir Ambrose looked stern, with a defiance that seemed the effect of great exertion. Giles Grey had a countenance of more than usual languor and melancholy. Margaret sat in fixed despair.

Browne alone was composed. He was not joyous; he knew human nature too well: that would have appeared like an insult. He said, "Sir Ambrose, be at ease: Huntley will recover with quiet; it was some accidental over-exercise, before his strength was quite re-established."

"Was it *accidental?*" enquired Sir Ambrose; "are you sure that it was *accidental?*"

Margaret turned pale, and trembled; she then burst into tears; and when she could recover her voice, she said, "Uncle, I am afraid I am the person to blame. I ought not to have rode home so fast. Alas! what reparation can I make?"

Sir Ambrose paused, and turned a frown into a smile. He sat next to

Margaret; he turned towards her, and said, almost in a whisper, "Nurse him then with all your care: he is a dear boy to me." As he spoke these last words, his voice, unlike itself, faltered into extreme tenderness, and the tear, never seen there before, ran down his hard war-worn face.

Margaret felt comforted; there was even a mixture of joy for her in the manner in which this vent of her conscience had been received. She repaired as early as possible to Huntley's sick apartment. She found him in less pain: he thanked her for her attentions: she said, "they are yours by right; I was the cause of your illness; I caused your wound to bleed afresh by the quick pace with which I made you ride home. What reparation can I make you?"

"I ask no reparation. I am content with your good wishes," he answered mournfully.

"But you shall have my prayers,

Huntley, and my incessant watchings," she replied earnestly, mixed with a little pique.

Hal, the Seer, met Margaret when she quitted Huntley's apartment, as she was descending from the upper part of the hall to the screens, in her way to another part of the castle. He doffed his little cap, bowed to the floor, and cried, "All hail to the Lady Margaret! May blessings attend her, and a love worthy of her crown her happiness!"

"Gentle Bard!" she exclaimed a little hastily, "another time — another time! I am not quite well now; besides, I am engaged." She caught his look — it was dismay; then throwing a sweetness into her voice, she added, "But thou excellent little spirit, be sure that I will attend to thee another opportunity. Thou knowest I love thee, Hal!" For all the family had a respect for this little creature, amounting almost to a mysterious awe.

Hal felt comforted.— "Ah!" he cried, "sooth, she is a bonny lady; a comely one, and kind, as becomes a Grey! It shall go well with her; it shall go well with her. I will call up spirits to avenge her, if it does not go well with her."

But Hal was not easy at his heart; he passed a night, in which his sleep was haunted by comfortless dreams. When he rose, he felt so debilitated that he panted for the free air. A little pony was at his command; a gentle animal, that he could either tie to a tree, or that would quietly graze by him when he was willing to dismount. He sauntered along one of the deepest allies of the forest to a bench, which stood in a little opening lawn.

Hither had often resorted to him the country wanderers, who were in the habit of seeking his conversation. He had not been an hour, when he heard two voices along the blind forest track. As soon as they issued from the enclosure of

wood, they cast their eyes upon him, and turned towards the bench where he was sitting. As they advanced, he observed them to be two women, one very young, the other approaching to the middle age.

The elder addressed him with great ease and volubility, in a style best adapted to conciliate him, as if she knew well his character. "Ah, Hal of the Hall!" said she, "how goes it with thee in these troublesome times? Joy to thee! joy to these noble forests! joy to that venerable castle, that thou hast risen from the grave, gentle Hal! Where would have been the hearts of the village girls, and of all the gossips fifty miles round, if the green grass had covered thee, Hal? and the inspirations of that tongue had been silenced by the grim god of our destiny?"

"Ah!" said Hal, "we bards are immortal, you see, good woman!"

"Do not call me good woman; call me *Brown Bess*, if you will. Look at me! am I not as brown as a walnut?"

"Well then, Brown Bess, thou seemest a lively one! Whence comest thou?"

"It matters not whence I come: many a league away, thou mayst be sure, or else thou wouldst have seen me often before."

"And whence that pretty blushing girl, that hides her face so anxiously?"

"O, I picked her up on the road, and we trudged together for companionship. She knows her own errand. Perhaps you will find it out: she does not choose to tell it to me. What if she should be come to consult the *wise one*, whom all the girls of the country delight in consulting?"

"Well, Brown Bess; and what dost thou want?"

"Askest thou? they say, thou art in concert with spirits, and canst tell without asking."

"They belie me then, Bess; and thou hast sense enough to know it."

"To the purpose then. — How go the

lordly chiefs that rule over this part of the province? How goes the noble family of Grey?"

"It is well with them, Bess? It must be well with so honourable a house!"

"Ha! say'st thou so? Is it always well with an honourable house?"

"O no, no; not always so; but it is well with the Greys. Why askest thou?"

"Is it well, Hal, when there is treachery in the house? Is it well, when staffs shiver, and banners fall, and walls quake? Is it well when sons fall in love with peasant girls, and daughters fall in love with obscure bastards?" Bess's younger companion gave an involuntary start.

"What ails thee, girl?" cried Bess; and then she went on: "Hal, thou canst not say this is well."

"Thou art a devil," cried Hal, "come to tempt me to tell tales. I will not be drawn into thy snares. Go to, Bess, and leave me to my musings!"

"Say then, that Harry Huntley shall not marry Margaret Grey!" cried Bess.

"I cannot say so," answered Hal; "the actions of the house of Wolstenholme are not at my command."

"I say then, it shall not be!" cried Bess in a deep menacing tone.

"Who art thou, that say'st it shall not be?" replied Hal: "if thou art not human, I have a charm against such spirits as thou art. Avaunt!"

"Say not avaunt to me!" rejoined Bess in a tone of bold defiance; "I could shake thy pigmy form to atoms! But I go; remember my threats.—Girl! tell thy tale; and meet me again at the top of the path, that leads to yonder brow. I interfere not with the secrets of others."

Bess rushed forward, and was under the shelter of the wood almost before the girl knew where she was. Hal was not less disconcerted than this girl. The threats of Bess had made him writhe with a mixture of fear and anger.

"We are met in an evil hour, young damsel," at last, said Hal with an attempt at composure.

"We are indeed, Sir;" answered the girl in a trembling, but exquisitely melodious voice.

"O! how different," exclaimed Hal, "from the voice of thy companion! Loveliest, the sound of those lips is music. What wouldst thou of Hal of the Hall?"

She hesitated; she trembled; she grew pale. "Canst thou not divine, Sir? I had heard, thou wast a prophet?"

Hal laughed: "A prophet, lovely one? and what wouldst thou of a prophet?"

"I am told that thou knowest by thine art all that passes in these provinces. Canst thou tell a lover in disguise? Canst thou recognize a graceful young man of rank in the veil of a peasant's dress by the description?"

"What, if I can, sweet rose-bud, how wilt thou reward me?"

"Thou shalt have my prayers; and I will dress many a posy for thee, and make thee a crown of primroses and violets from the firstlings of the year."

"Withdraw that veil from thy face, beautiful creature, and perhaps I shall be able to answer thee better." She gently withdrew the veil, but her face was covered with blushes.

Hal started: "Thou art an enchantress!" cried he: "whence didst thou get that angelic countenance?"

"O! do not flatter me, if thou art indeed the wise one, they call thee; but satisfy my enquiries!"

"Come then, to thy description, rosebud."

"Alas! I find I cannot describe; the words die upon my lips. But is it ever permitted to the great really to love the humble?"

"It is possible; but it is seldom happy for either party."

"But are they sincere, when they profess such love?"

"Very rarely; *men were deceivers ever*, as the song says. It is their aim to rifle the sweets of the flower, and then to throw it away."

The girl wept. "Thou art caught then, art thou, already, tender one," cried Hal. "Is there a heart hard enough to deceive such beauty as thine? Woe be to that base and wicked heart!"

"Oh! he is not base and wicked; indeed, he is not base and wicked: he is all goodness!"

"But why, thinkest thou," continued Hal, "that he who comes in the guise of a peasant, is a youth of rank? Is not this the romantic fancy of a girl in love?"

"I have a thousand signs, which I cannot mistake," said she. "His person; his words; his language; his sentiments; the very hints he let drop."

"Describe his person!"

"He is somewhat above the middle

height; well made, but slender; pale, grave, melancholy; eyes dark, and, when roused, brilliant; dark brown hair; a nose less regular, and less well-formed than the other parts of his countenance; a mellow voice, captivating, and going to the heart of those who listen to him; a tinge of sorrow in all he says; a benevolence; a generous sort of haughtiness; the air, that one's imagination attaches to high nobility, and something of the regret that appears to arise from the suspicion of a decaying name."

Hal, while these words breathed from the lips of the peasant girl, was lap'd into astonishment. He might have exclaimed with Comus, (if Comus had then been written,)

"Can any mortal mixture of earth's mould
Breathe such divine enchanting ravishment?
Sure something holy lodges in that breast!"

"Art thou of earth?" said Hal.

" Whence comes this eloquence and energy in a peasant?"

" If I have any words above my station," said she, with the most touching simplicity, " it is pure love alone that inspires them. I love and adore one, whose language I have strove to catch!"

" And well may he be himself inspired," cried Hal, " when he looks in thy enchanting face!"

" But tell me, I intreat thee," she continued, " if thou knowest one, who answers this description."

" I may puzzle my brains long ere I can find such an one," said he. " Our young men of rank have little sentiment in these days. I know but one, and his affections have long been buried in the grave. Besides, he is of so illustrious a race, that I doubt, if even your charms could induce him to ally himself to a female of low birth."

" O! in mercy, give me but a few

hints of him, that I may guess if it be he!"

"He cannot be the person, lovely rose-bud! Make your mind easy upon that!"

"O! but in mercy, good Hal, indulge a little this feverish curiosity that racks my brain!"

"It would only mislead you. He cannot be the person. Nay, he must not be the person."

"My heart sinks at these ominous words!" she exclaimed; and then she burst into tears. Hal softened his voice, and comforted her.

"I spoke too strongly," said he; "there may be twenty such young men, of whom I know nothing. There is only one, of whom I said, it *must not* be. And to whom would not such beauty and eloquence as yours be a treasure above all price?"

"But wilt thou say more of this pro-

scribed youth?" exclaimed she mournfully.

" I confess his person is not unlike that which you have described. As to his manners, he is mild; but if he *has* a fault, it is pride. He is condescending; but he is not easily caught with female beauty; his heart has been long shut to it. He has admired it in all its fervor; and I doubt if even the soft and tender lustre of the eyes that now beam upon me, through those supplicating tears, could light up the flame in his bosom afresh."

" Hal of the Hall! benevolent, well-meaning, yet once mistaken spirit, adieu!" said the girl, in a transport of tender agitation. " It is enough! I leave thee. Thou to thy occupations, and I to mine. Hark! Bess calls me from the hill! She is impatient." She kissed his hand: the tears ran down her cheeks. She hastened away.

CHAP. XII.

BROWN BESS AND HER COMPANION VISIT WOLSTENHOLME CASTLE.

THE girl found Bess resting on a bank at the top of the hill, to which she had directed her. Bess's countenance was red with impatience.

"And what hast thou been doing in this long discourse," said she, "with the pigmy of the castle? And thou hast been crying, too; thine eyes are swelled out of thine head! What, spoil that pretty face by crying, chit? And such a pigmy make thee cry too! Well, then, some lover, I suppose; and he has told thee to go and break thy heart, and wear willows; has he? What, deck those auburn locks with willows, and wash out that tender bloom by tears, and sink that

soft voice in sorrow? oh, no, chit, no; that is not the way to go on in this bustling world. And who may this youth be that has caught such a star as thou art? I bar but one; remember, I bar but one: be sure, girl, it is not young Master Huntley! Thou hast heard of the gallant Huntley?"

"Your mind may be at ease," said the girl in a subdued voice, "'Squire Huntley is no lover of mine."

"It is well, then, girl," cried Bess, more composedly: "I thought not; I thought not: but thou hast a charming face, chit: and I know, that Huntley has an eye for beauty; and that's the truth on't."

"Didst thou ever see one, like Huntley?" said the girl, now revived in courage.

"No," answered Bess; "but I have heard of one, and he is not far from hence, I suspect; and *thou* may'st see

him, child, if thou wilt walk with me two or three miles farther."

"Oh! where, where?" she replied eagerly.

"To yonder far-famed castle," said Bess, pointing to Wolstenholme.

"O! I cannot go there," she exclaimed; "I cannot go there!"

"And why not, chit? and what is *there* to frighten thee?"

"I cannot go; indeed, I cannot."

"But thou shalt go!"

"O! I am sure there is somebody there that will know me; and then I shall be ruined for ever!"

"Fearful, puling, ignorant child, if thou dread'st a discovery, I will disguise thee in ten minutes, so that thy fondest lover should not guess at thee."

"O, good Bess, but you must not make me odious."

"What, thou art so fond of that pretty face, art thou? thou, that pretendest to be so humble? Vain one! all alike, as I

always said. Come hither; we will step but a few paces out of the track; and it shall be done in a trice; know, chit, I am here at my vocation. Observe *yonder* tree. Its juice shall make thee in ten minutes unknown to thy very father."

"But will it come off again?"

"Yes, madam Vanity, it *will* come off; and leave thy lover again to praise the lily and the rose, that so befool him! and those auburn locks too, that curl upon that pretty bosom: they shall be as black as the wings of a raven. And who will know in the gypsey-girl the fair flower of the woodlands?"

The girl was overpowered. She suffered Bess to do as she would with her. Bess stained her cheeks with walnut-juice; drenched her hair in a liquid she carried in her pocket, and totally new-arranged her dress, and disfigured her so, that certainly no slight inspection would have discovered her.

Many times before they arrived at the castle, did the girl stop, and refuse to

proceed. As the pinnacles of the chapel tower rose over the last intervening wood, she started: "Is that the castle?" she said; "if it is, I cannot go on: my heart beats so, I shall drop."

"Chit; feeble one; what airs; what coquetry! Come on, I say!"

At that moment the clock struck; the bugle sounded; and Sir Ambrose, and a train of horsemen, issuing from the gateway, were heard, as if advancing towards them. Now, what would the trembling girl have given to be safe and quiet at her own home again. "My lot is cast," she thought to herself, "and this unhappy hour will ruin all my prospects."

Luckily the horsemen took another road. They passed at a distance, and they had a glimpse of their figures.—"There he goes!" exclaimed Bess; "there goes the man who has caused me to trudge many a wearisome fifty miles; ah! and the pelting of many a pitiless storm, and many a hungry day,

and shivering night! Ah! look at his brawny form, and exulting gestures! Yet, be not too sure of thy victims. Man! the deceiver may sometimes be deceived. Go thy way, wicked one; and be foiled at thine own game!"

The girl looked; but there was no figure in the group which she could recognise. Her bosom palpitated; she had hoped, even while she had feared, to catch the glance of the form impressed upon her heart.

Bess advanced boldly: she soon found her way through the court-yard towards the servants' hall. She was received there by the servants, as fortune-tellers are generally received, with eagerness. It is dangerous to begin with asking questions. Bess knew her trade better.

"Comest thou east, or comest thou west?" said one.

"I come south-west by the sun; an' please you, Mr. Curiosity," cried Bess.

"And bringest thou news of aught

that is stirring among our remoter neighbours?"he went on.

"Nought that concerns thee, man! but much of petty warfare among the 'squires and the lords. The great ones that, heaven help them, when they might live in peace, love trouble for its own sake!"

"Ah! war — war! and seeds of war, contest, and troubles, and bad passions!" exclaimed the man, shaking his head significantly; "it is nothing else; trouble is, indeed, as plentiful in this world as the falling leaves of the forest in a stormy day of autumn."

"And hast thou trouble here then," said Bess; "under these noble roofs; beneath these grand towers, that rule unelbowed over the woods, the forests, and the wolds, beyond where the eye on yonder hill, can see, or the horseman can ride?"

"We have our troubles, and our seeds of trouble, Dame; that, if thou hast the

cunning thou pretendest to, thou oughtest to know."

"It comes, and it goes," she answered; "we know one minute, and know not the next; it is revealed, and it is hid from us; it is in light, it is in shadow; it flits by us, it is vanished; we can see, and we are blind; we are wise, and ignorant by turns. How goes it with the brave Sir Ambrose, whose fame is up on the confines of other shires? Waxes he well in his growing age? Has the weather of time blanched his ruby cheeks?"

"It goes well with him yet; but he has his troubles as his years advance."

"Ha! I thought not a trouble could touch the firm heart of Sir Ambrose Grey!"

"Didst thou ever hear of a youth they call Huntley?"

"I have heard of such a youth."

"He lies here on his sick-bed; and it will be well if he ever rises from it but

on men's shoulders to rest under the earth beneath those pinnacles!"

A tear started into the eye of Bess. "Is it come to this?" cried she. "I dreamed as much, ere I set out on this wearisome walk. The figure of a youth, such as I have imagined Huntley to be, had been haunting my slumbers for many a feverish night! Blood streamed down his face; he stretched out his arms to me. He said, 'Save me, Bess, from the wicked one! thou hast saved me before!' He haunts my steps; he blights my prospects; he lays snares for my destruction. I have not slept but in starts and terrors since. I sat out in my sorrow to travel whither my fate led me; it has led me hither. Tell me, then (almost gasping for breath), something more of this ominous tale!"

"We must be careful in divulging family stories to a stranger," answered the man: "but the poor fellow has been wounded spitefully, that is sure. Sir

Ambrose, who takes an interest in him beyond what his name imports, has taken all pains, but cannot discover the perpetrator of this cruelty. The youth does not want for attentions; all the family watch him as if he was their son or their brother."

"Or, may you not add their *lover?*" replied Bess, with a sly glance.

"Why, as for that, the Lady Margaret takes on about it not a little: quite as much as beseems a modest maiden of her rank, it must be confessed."

"Ah, there it is!" exclaimed Bess, in agitation; "why that jade Fame is busy with her name, man, already. Tell her waiting-maid to caution her how she trifles with the stately pride of the daughters of the house of Grey!"

"But is not 'Squire Huntley 'a proper' young man?"

"Not proper for the Lady Margaret Grey!" Bess answered sharply.

"Well, well," said the man, with a

sigh, " it will be soon ended, I doubt not, by other wills than hers."

" And is it as bad as that?" cried Bess, vehemently; " let me see him, I entreat thee! I deal in spells; perchance I have a cure for this wound."

" It cannot be. I dare not carry you to him."

" O! ask the Lady Margaret herself! tell her, that I have an infallible receipt for wounds of the head! You say she is kind: she will not refuse this earnest request."

The man went, and obtained Margaret's leave. Bess was introduced into the chamber of Huntley. Margaret was sitting by his bed-side. She started at Bess's figure. The black locks that hung dishevelled over her face, gave her an expression of mysterious terror.

Huntley was asleep; the big drops of pain stood upon his countenance; he had a ghastly look. Bess lifted her hands and eyes, and struggled to hide a

tear. She looked sternly at Margaret. "Is it come to this, then?" she said, in an hurried and under tone. Margaret shuddered.

"Dost thou think him very ill?" exclaimed Margaret.

"Hush!" she answered, "hush! this is not the time for idle words: my brain, Lady Margaret, my brain must work; alas! it *does* work."

She knelt by his bed-side; she took his hand, and kissed it. "One chance," she cried, "and thou mayest yet recover!" Margaret began to talk.

"Silence! Lady Margaret," said Bess, "if thou wouldest talk, it must be in another apartment."

Margaret now beckoned her along a gallery to a distant room. "And what wouldest thou have with me, Lady Margaret?" said Bess.

"If thou really hast cunning and skill, good woman, tell me what thou thinkest of Huntley!"

"Art thou prepared, then, for my sincere opinion?"

"I am prepared!" but she turned very pale while she said it.

"Then," cried Bess, in a solemn tremulous tone, "I do not think well of him! There has been foul play somewhere, Lady Margaret!"

"There has, indeed," answered Margaret. "Alas! I have contributed to it! but most innocently and unwittingly: witness heaven! The wound broke out after riding home too fast with me."

"Well, well; I know, Lady Margaret, you did not give the wound; but how happened it you forgot the invalid when you rode home so fast?"

A pause: Margaret answered not. Bess repeated the question somewhat relentlessly.

"I am guilty; a fit of absence took me; I forgot the health of Huntley."

"A fit of absence, say you? was it not a fit of temper, Lady Margaret?"

"I perceive you are, in truth, a cunning woman. I am afraid to talk to you."

"The heart must be probed when it is loaded, Lady Margaret. Faults may be amended that are confessed: guard thy temper and thy feelings in future, and there yet may be hope."

"You talk mysteriously, good woman; I dare not enquire too deeply into your meaning."

"Innocence dares to walk in the broadest light, Lady Margaret. It is the guilty design that seeks the veil of concealment."

"Dost thou suspect me of guilt, then?" exclaimed Margaret, resuming her courage: "what dost thou mean by guilt?"

"There are a thousand degrees of guilt. It is guilt to quit thy station; it is guilt to intrigue with an engaged heart."

Margaret shook through her whole frame; she resolved to end this painful conversation. "Whence comest thou?"

cried she; "art thou a good or an evil spirit? Good or evil; whether to threaten or to guide, I am now too unwell to listen to thy mysteries. Farewell, for the present, good woman: let our kind wishes be mutual."

Bess took her leave. When she descended to the servants' hall, her companion, whom she had left below, was missing. She enquired anxiously for her; she traced her up the road to a green bank on the brow of an hill, where she found her leaning over a gateway, absorbed in thought, and her eyes red with tears. She had escaped to avoid the prying eyes and coarse language of the servants.

A horseman was now seen advancing towards the track by which they had left the castle. He rode slowly, and seemed wrapt in a deep meditation; two dogs accompanied him, to which he sometimes spoke in a fond but low voice. The companion of Bess fixed her eyes earnestly

upon him; nor was the observation of Bess herself much less attracted towards him. At last she exclaimed, "If I had not left Huntley sick in bed, I should have said, *here he comes!* Ah! poor dear Huntley! thou wilt never again ride thus as thou hast done! By heavens, how like him? Art thou his ghost, come thus to warn me of his departure!" Bess was too much engrossed by this appearance to notice the agitation of the girl, who went and leaned over a gateway, and hid her face with her hands.

The nearer the figure approached, the more agitated Bess became. Her eyes saw dimly; she could not look steadily at it. As it came close she kneeled and trembled. The horseman was now passing her; he saw her on her knees; he observed her agitation; he stopped. "Why prayest thou, good woman?" he said; "art thou in need? and shall I relieve thee?"

"O no! no!" she exclaimed, recover-

ing herself. "I took thee for another, whose ghost thou must have been. I confess my superstition overwhelmed me. I perceive that, if thou art a star, or a vision, thou art one of this nether world!"

The horseman thought her crazed, and was passing on. "Stay a moment, honoured gentleman!" she exclaimed; "thou hast an eye that beams benevolence; and it pours balm upon my withering heart to look upon it. I know thee now. I know thee well, though this weeping sight was never blest with looking upon thee before. Ah! it looks as he, for whom my bosom writhes, used to look!"

"What means this, good woman?" said the stranger.

"O! it eases this swelling heart that must burst else to talk thus! Hear me a little while, and I will bless thee as thou deservest to be blest."

The stranger was now more convinced that her senses were wandering; but his

extreme benevolence made him resolve to listen.

She went on. (He gave her a smile of pitying tenderness; for few things affected him more than the wandering of the human intellect.) "O! let me gaze upon that sweet countenance! I may gaze upon its counterpart no more! It smiled once as thou smilest; but the icy fingers of death approach it; the wicked one hath dealt his blows on it. It speaks not; it looks not! Death, thou wilt have an ungenerous victory!"

She paused to recover her voice. It occurred to the horseman, that it was the raving of some unhappy mother who had lost a beloved son.

"And thou art here then," she proceeded; "and thou art here to preserve thy noble house! It shall live green in thy goodness; its leaves shall freshen; and its flowers shall bloom. Shall they not? Thou lookest pale now. Dost thou look too fearfully into futurity?

The massy towers shall not tumble; but if towers tumble, and matter decays, and wealth runs out, spirit never dies! Bury it in ruins, it will spring up; hide it beneath the earth, it will burst forth again! Ah! thou, whom so often I have rescued from the jaws of mortal annihilation, awake! Arouse! revive at my prayers; and be again like him who now stands before me in the sweetness of youthful bloom, blessing as he will be blest!"

As she spoke this, she sprung forward, and, seizing the stranger's hand, bathed it in her tears; then throwing back her black locks, and looking full upon him with her streaming eyes, which yet shot a blaze of light, she cried, "Preserve him—oh, yet preserve him! and may heaven, in all its tenderest bounties, preserve thee!"

The stranger's feelings could no longer bear this; he took a gentle leave. When he was gone the girl lifted up her head

to look after him; and when he was so far out of sight that her eyes could no longer pursue him, she threw her arms about the neck of Bess, and they both wept loudly, yet with very unlike sensations.

We will leave, for the present, to pursue their journey whither their destinies carried them.

CHAP. XIII.

HUNTLEY RECOVERS. — BROWNE'S CONVERSATION. — SIR AMBROSE'S ADVICE.

HUNTLEY'S disorder had been at its height. A sudden amendment took place: and in ten days his recovery was nearly completed.

Sir Ambrose, in his unbounded joy for having unexpectedly saved him, grew every day more fond of him, and more kind to him. The influence over each other was thus mutually increased. The desire of one was in numerous cases a law to the other.

Margaret Grey also, whose attentions to Huntley during his illness had been uninterrupted, had obtained a great addition of power over her uncle. Nor was the influence of Browne over both

these less augmented; an augmentation which gave great uneasiness to Huntley, who yet had not the means of preventing it.

Lord Grey was growing very feeble; the world seemed as if it was fading before him; he grew indifferent to most of the concerns which had hitherto employed his anxieties. In mere debility he was willing to let almost every thing take its own course.

Giles Grey felt himself more and more alienated from the world. He had been disgusted with ambition early in life; and it was impossible to revive it in him. His sensibility was morbidly extreme; he had about him all the *passive* qualities of genius. If he wanted, what are more peculiarly its essence, the *active ones*, perhaps it might have arisen more out of the early blight of his hopes, and the accompanying enfeeblement of his health, than from a want of native powers.

His love of reading had become a

passion; but his devotion was to works of fancy and sentiment. His fondness for every rural sight and sound was full of purity and virtue, and his taste for the picturesque appearances of nature was enthusiastic and exquisite.

He withdrew himself more and more every day from all the tedious watchfulness and unbending hardness of business, by which the family affairs passed more and more every day under the management of Sir Ambrose, or of agents.

He was strongly attached to Huntley; but as he could not but be strongly persuaded that he was an illegitimate son of his uncle Sir Ambrose, he could not entirely reconcile his mind to the marriage of his sister with him: it harassed him between his wishes and his rooted opinions; and in his present state of health, he could not summon up the courage to resolve.

He could not but consider the succession to the honours and estate uncertain;

for his fears whispered to him, that he should never marry. His sister, in that case, would inherit a large portion of the lands, if no heir-male could establish his claim.

In this strange conflict of interests and mystery of circumstances, all in the castle was at crosses, and doubt and discomfort were too apparent in most of its countenances. In proportion as there was a want of internal tranquillity, there was more attempt at merriment, more noise, more search after amusement.

In this, both Sir Ambrose and Browne showed themselves more particularly active. The castle was filled with company, whom Sir Ambrose drew thither. Huntley was not yet strong enough for violent exercise; but between Sir Ambrose, Browne, and Margaret, gentle walks and rides were contrived for his mornings; and the evenings passed in music, the song, and the dance.

Browne found it difficult to make any

impression on a mind so prejudiced against him as Huntley's. He knew human nature so well, that he was sure that he had no chance by direct attacks. It was by aiming all the powers of his conversation at third persons, and thus winning his way by reflection from the impression made on others. He had luckily selected half a dozen men as visitors, who would well answer this end. They were men of judgment, varying in degrees; and in taste and knowledge; but more inclined to listen than to talk, except in those short remarks which rather whet than damp the powers of a copious discusser.

Huntley, whose native powers were too active to be satisfied while others engrossed to themselves nearly the whole conversation, was yet so languid from his late illness, that he was now willing to hear rather than to exert himself to take much part in what passed.

A fortnight passed in this way. Few

men could, in any length of time, have displayed such acute knowledge of life as he did in that short period; but, though covered with wit and the flowers of imagery, it was all insidious bitterness at bottom. He had taken up a hateful theory of the falsehood and depravity of human nature. It was his aim to represent that all pretensions to goodness were hypocrisy; that men pursued only their own interests; that power and wealth alone were safety; that love was the dream of a child; that in women, above all, there was no constancy or truth; that, of all follies, the belief in their chastity was the most ridiculous.

On this last topic he had an infinity of stories, which he told with so much humour, and with so many particularities, that no one could hear them entirely unshaken by them. They left a gall upon the mind, and came like a blight upon the blooming hopes of youthful enthusiasm.

Sir Ambrose, meantime, began to open to Huntley his future prospects for him. He told him, that having adopted him, he was most anxious to see him provided for ere he died; that, of all things in life, dependence and poverty were the most terrible; that imperious circumstances, which he could not then disclose, put it totally out of his power to make any provision himself for him; but that he had paved the road to a splendid alliance, and a large contingent fortune for him; that nothing but his own folly and obstinacy could throw it away; and that if, from whatever motive, he yielded to such folly and obstinacy, he must abandon him for ever.

"After this," he continued, "I scarcely need say to you, that my niece, Margaret Grey, is in love with you; and that you must marry her. I have observed your reluctance; it is some boyish delusion; I enquire not what. Mere fanciful love is not to be endured by one

who aspires to the sense of a man. If you think so now, I can answer for it, you will not think so at two-and-twenty. The prettiest face does not make the happiest wife; nay, the very raptures of love turn to disappointment and hate; it is the sober, prudent match, of which the enjoyment lasts; of which the advantages remain to be enjoyed, after rapture has turned to disgust."

Huntley left Sir Ambrose sorrowful and wounded to the heart. He could not meet his protector's kind intentions by rude and insulting language; he was silent, and retired to weep; he grew restless; the close solitude of his apartment was insufferable to the weight he felt on his bosom; he ran to the stable, and mounted his horse; he strolled about the rides of the forest for the rest of the morning.

One of the keepers, observing his melancholy looks, strove to engage him in conversation, but with little success till

they arrived at the keeper's lodge. At the threshold, a pretty girl met her father with joy in her eyes. They entered; all was neatness; honeysuckles grew over the windows, and pots of simple flowers were on the mantle-piece. Three fowling-pieces hung over the chimney; and most of the implements connected with the sports of the forest, or the chase, were suspended round the room. The wife, a neat-looking woman, was quietly employed at her wheel.

"Are you happy and content?" said Huntley.

"I would not exchange my lot with the lord of the castle!" cried he. "I have health, and fresh air, and joyous amusements, and competence, and little anxiety. I have heard that care dwells in castles and palaces, and I believe it."

"And what says that pretty rosy-faced girl?"

"She says, that she sings and gather flowers half the day, and sleeps soundly at night."

" Alas !" exclaimed Huntley ; " my heart tells me, that you are right. But I am told that I am, at my peril, to think otherwise ; and I must go." He shook the girl by the hand, and looking kindly upon her, said : " May you be happier than I am." — When he was gone, the girl dwelt on the praises of young 'Squire Huntley, and wondered what could be the matter with him.

CHAP. XIV.

HUNTLEY'S MARRIAGE WITH MARGARET GREY NEARLY EFFECTED BY THE ARTIFICES OF BROWNE; AND HOW PREVENTED.

It was after dinner of the following day, that Browne again displayed his supposed knowledge of the characters of women. He boasted of his own successes with them, and said he had never yet failed in obtaining the favour of any one, whom he had thought it worth his while to pursue. But, he added, it was their constant policy, when they secretly preferred one, to give outward encouragement to another.

Huntley was disgusted and indignant; but he now considered Browne a man of such profligate vanity and falsehood, that, in his present subdued spirits he had not

the energy to enter into a contest with him.

At length Browne turned the conversation. He started some question of history, and from thence gradually got upon the subject of coins. He had a small box full of them in his pocket. He selected two or three, which he asserted to bear upon the point in dispute. He held them in his hand. Huntley expressed a curiosity to see them. He took out a letter from his pocket, as if carelessly; tore off a small piece of it, and wrapping them in it, sent them across the table to Huntley.

As Huntley unfolded the paper he was struck with the hand-writing. He trembled, but he pretended to examine the coins. After seeming to pore over them some time, he said a difficulty struck him, concerning which he wished to consult some book in the library, before he returned them. Browne said, "Keep them as long as you like."

When he retired, which he did as soon as he thought he could avoid observation, he examined the paper with a breathless curiosity. "It was certainly the handwriting of Alice Berkeley; *it spoke of attachment; it enquired after health; it spoke of the dread of being the victim of him, who, she feared, was resolved to persecute her.*"

"God of Heaven!" he exclaimed: "is, in truth, the perfidy of women come to this? Is Browne's character of them so soon and so fatally proved to me? Has he been insulting me with this knowledge, that he knew came so home to me? Does Alice Berkeley then write love-letters to this profligate and ungenerous wretch? O, Alice, most cruel and deceitful of women! I abandon thee for ever!"

Huntley appeared no more that night. A delirium seized him: he wandered into the forest, and was found in the morning under a tree, in a state of stupor.

A keeper brought him back to the castle. He was carried to his apartment, and put to bed. It was believed to be a return of the complaint arising from the injury on his head. Sir Ambrose and Margaret were again called to watch him.

During the whole of that day he took little notice. The tears stole down his cheeks, and he sighed deeply. The second night he slept better, and felt refreshed in the morning. Margaret's quiet and affectionate attentions now seemed grateful to him.

Sir Ambrose, watchful of Huntley's manner and expressions towards her, let this go on for three more days. He then said to him earnestly: "Huntley, I feel that I am decaying very fast: you will want protection: marry my niece, Margaret, who is the only woman fit for you, and I shall die in peace!"

Huntley hid his face upon his pillow, and was convulsed. Then starting up in a phrensy, he exclaimed: "It is done,

honoured Sir! My fate is fixed! I obey!"

"Excellent boy!" exclaimed Sir Ambrose, "this is the happiest moment of my life." "But," added he, "it must be done quickly."

"No matter," replied Huntley, "if it must be, the sooner it is done, the better."

"To-morrow evening then, in the chapel."

"Ah! to-morrow evening, in the chapel."

Huntley now said to himself, "I am playing a desperate game. But, perhaps, the more desperate the better. I will rise, the air will refresh me."

He sauntered slowly along one of the most solitary walks, to which he had been accustomed. All was a sort of dull and almost tranquil despondence. He saw Hal of the Hall in conference with a woman at a distance, but he avoided them. He remained out, till twilight

was coming on. He heard the voices, and the songs of the peasantry, as they were returning from their work. Among the rest, there came across him the fragments of a song, of which he endeavoured to catch the words, but in vain. It was a deep, tender tone, a slow chant rather than a song. And he sometimes suspected he heard the voice of Hal as if conversing with the singer.

O! what an awful evening did he now pass! Margaret was pensive but tranquil, and looked upon him with a modest sweetness. Giles Grey, not privy to what was about to take place, seemed to have a presentiment that something eventful to his family was in agitation. He sat buried in musings; absent from all around him, with the tears often starting into his eyes. Sir Ambrose could not refrain from discovering some of the joy, that swelled his heart.

It was a night in which the wind was up by fits: sometimes it only muttered

and growled; sometimes it shrieked through the battlements. Hal was in high perturbation, and murmured out his fragments of poetry through the whole evening.

In the morning, it was found that there had been great devastation in the Park. Some of the finest old trees had been blown up by the roots, or had been denuded of their noblest branches. One of the pinnacles of the chapel had fallen, and the tower, called the Berkeley-tower, had lost one half its battlement.

Almost all the household insisted they heard the call of spirits, and the sound of voices in the air, at many periods of the night. And at four different times, they saw what they believed to be an apparition under the window of Huntley's chamber. They said, they heard it distinctly cry: *Huntley! Huntley! unhappy Huntley! — arise — awake — come away — thy faithful one waits thee, Huntley! Thy bride waits thee in her winding sheet!*

This was not related to Huntley. The strictest injunctions were given to the servants not to let him hear it, on the ground of the weak state of his health.

The agonies of the suspense till the evening of this new day had more than once nearly overset the frail nerves of Huntley. At length the evening clock struck *eight!* It was the summons to the chapel. The night was dark. It was agreed that every thing should be conducted in the most quiet and secret manner.

Margaret, the Priest, Sir Ambrose, and one confidential attendant, were already there. The ceremony of marriage began. Huntley trembled in every limb. The lamps burned blue. Gusts of wind rattled through the windows, and even seemed to sigh across the altar. The priest went on, but his voice began to hesitate. Then came a shriek; and then from behind one of the tombs issued these

words in a low, yet solemn and distinct tone:

" Hark! Stay thy perjured hand! O stay!
The white cross trembles on its blood-red field.
The faithful maid to wild despair a prey,
Her spirit to the killing blast will yield!
O stay, thy perjured lips ! O, stay!"

The priest dropped his book; Margaret fainted; Huntley fled. The rest got back to their own apartments, as they could.

A general disorder reigned through the house. It was reported, that Margaret had seen a ghost, and had been frightened into fits.

The vexation which this brought upon Sir Ambrose, nearly killed him. Browne, who had been privy to, but not present at this intended ceremony, in the agonies of his disappointment at the non-fulfilment of his scheme, quitted Wolstenholme.

Margaret was attacked by a fever under which she long suffered very severely.

Huntley fled from the castle that night, and found his way in a state of distraction, he knew not how, to his old tutor's at Cheeveley.

When he arrived there, he could give no account of himself: his recollection was gone. He was put to bed, and nursed with the fondest attention.

Sir Ambrose was not so lost, as to omit sending after him, and was in some degree comforted to find that he had reached Cheeveley.

CHAP. XV.

ALICE AT MR. SCUDAMORE'S. — BROWNE JOINS THE PARTY. — ALICE RETURNS TO THE RECTORY. — VISITED THERE BY HUNTLEY.

Browne's wits were not yet exhausted. He never despaired when mischief was in view. Alice Berkeley had now been some days on a visit at Mr. Scudamore's, and Browne had had the earliest intelligence of it. He went, therefore, direct from Wolstenholme to Mr. Scudamore's house.

He found Alice there, pale, but beautiful. His mode of address to her demanded all his skill. He did not discover that he had come from Wolstenholme. He strove to withdraw her attention from any thing connected with Huntley. There was an ease, and vivacity, and brilliance of mind, and knowledge of the

world about him, which Alice could not refrain from being pleased with.

When he had for three days engaged Alice's interest, he began to try if he could not loosen Huntley from her heart. He was aware that any violent attempt would only recoil upon himself. He began by affecting to praise Huntley; pretending at the same time to know little about him. Step by step, drop by drop, as if in mere carelessness, he let out something about what had been passing at Wolstenholme, but as mere matter of gossip, and not as if he had been personally present at it. This was done to sap her affections by raising her jealousy, and at the same time to induce a belief in her, that what he thus told arose from no prejudice or design on his part.

He then hinted at the rumour of a marriage between Huntley and Margaret Grey. This went to her heart: it was that of which she was always most afraid. The poison gave her a cold horror that

remained unabated through the two next days. Browne saw it work, and rejoiced in the bottom of his corrupt and black heart.

He did not approach her; he would on no account let a look of triumph peep out. On the third day she seemed to have plucked up a ray of spirit. He saw it, but he did not talk to her, as if he had supposed, that she could have been mortified. He insinuated as if the union of such beauty with the blood of the Berkeleys gave her an easy superiority over all rivals. He then slily described the person of Margaret Grey, contrasting it, as if involuntarily and undesignedly, with that of Alice.

Alice now said to herself, "I will throw off this useless anxiety and grief. There are sorrows enough, besides those which fancy creates. Things must take their course, and when one can meet with innocent pleasures, it is wise to embrace them."

After this, a fortnight passed, in which Browne flattered himself that he had made some progress in reconciling Alice to him. He had lost nothing of his admiration of female beauty. He was deeply impassioned at the sight of her person.

Kate, the gypsey, at length found her way to the door, and gained access to her, to let her know that Huntley had for some time lain dangerously ill at Cheeveley. Alice, the next day, returned to the Rectory house of her uncle Barney, where she waited with anxiety some more perfect intelligence of Huntley.

She was unwilling to ask much of her uncle, and aunt: but she was less restrained with one of the female servants. They could give little account, but that he had returned to Cheeveley in a state of alarming illness.

She now anxiously wished the farther aid of the intelligent Kate. She strolled

into the fields and lanes in the hope of meeting her; but no Kate was to be seen. She felt half inclined to walk as far as Cheeveley herself, but her courage failed her.

The interval was not long before her doubts were in some degree relieved. A few mornings afterwards, a horseman reached the gate of the Rectory, and alighting, walked slowly, and somewhat languidly up the Court. It was Huntley. Mr. Barney opened the door, and welcomed him with an hearty joy at again seeing him at the Rectory.

Alice descended with trembling steps into the parlour. She could not suppress her joy at beholding Huntley once more alive; but she started at his pallid looks, and emaciated figure. "Has Miss Berkeley been well," he cried, "during the long and wearisome time I have spent at Wolstenholme?"

"It seems to have been wearisome, if I judge by your looks," she answered:

" you must have surely been very unwell."

" The noise of that crowded castle did not do for one, who had received such an injury in his head," he replied. But he put his hand upon his heart, and Alice seemed to understand it. She blushed, but rejoined, " have you not yet then recovered from that dreadful and cruel blow on your head?"

" It has broke out again more than once," he said.

" Is not the air of Wolstenholme good?" cried Alice : " and I should have supposed that the liveliness of such an assemblage would have kept up your spirits."

" Liveliness to those, who are sad," exclaimed he mournfully, " is insult." There was a pause. Alice was agitated, but struggled to hide her feelings. She again made a desperate effort to keep up the conversation.

" How is Sir Ambrose Grey?" she continued : " Reports have reached us here, that he begins to feel his age."

" He certainly shows some symptoms of the wear of time."

" The country folks wonder that they have seen so little of him of late at *Hellingsley*."

" Perhaps," interposed Mr. Barney, " they may wonder more than grieve. Excuse me, Huntley." But recollecting himself, he added, " let us turn this conversation. With our prejudices, it is unfair to talk about the Greys to you, Huntley. How goes the vicar of Cheeveley ?"

" As usual," he answered; still more anxious than Mr. Barney to have the conversation turned. " He leads a solitary life, but I do not think it an unhappy one. It would not be active enough for me, at least according to the taste I have hitherto had: besides it is not the *sort* of a solitude I should like. It is too much of a literal solitude." — Alice coloured, but Huntley refrained from casting his eyes upon her.

" Well, Mr. Huntley," cried Mrs.

Barney: "but this solitude may now be very good for you, at least for a time. I am sure, that you require a great deal of quiet to get you well again. Indeed, I am never for that racketty kind of life that you have led of late."

"You have been wiser, Madam," said Huntley, "and have chosen a happier lot!" Mrs. Barney cast a smile of complacent triumph and gratitude upon him.

Huntley began to feel a calm come over his heart at this return to the peaceful scenes familiar with his childhood and his earliest affections.

"For show is empty; turbulence is folly;
Contentment dwells with peaceful Melancholy!"

Alice perceived that the extreme lan guor of his tones, at his first entrance, began to rise into a mellow sort of pensive, but slow energy. He alluded to parts of the scenery, which he had again passed that morning, between thevica-

rage and the residence of Mr. Barney. He spoke of some of the neighbouring villages, which were glittering in the sun. He said, " I could not help listening, as I looked down upon the old *Hall of Hellingsley.* I scarcely heard a sound except the loud cawings of the vast swarms of sable armies, that inhabit that ancient and gloomy rookery. I greeted the hoarse sounds. I had been, you know, accustomed to listen to them, rising up from the valley towards our side hills, from a boy. And there was Mr. Scudamore's—(Alice, you were always fond of Mr. Scudamore's)—with his neat windows, and trim gardens, and clipped hedges, glittering in the sun. I said to myself, 'Oh, that I could be as I was, when I last visited Mr. Scudamore's!"' And then his bosom heaved, and he dropped a tear.

Alice would now have told him, how lately she had paid a visit to Mr. Scudamore's, but seeing Huntley's agitation,

and conscious of the suspicions she had there entertained of him, which she now believed to be unjust, her courage failed her. Yet she experienced a sort of sense of degradation in the concealment, unlike those simple and innocent feelings which had hitherto been her pride.

When Huntley rose to take his leave, she accompanied him to the gate, and then, unwilling to part, gradually strolled down the lane with him. She could not bear to let him quit her, without having informed him of the visit at Mr. Scudamore's. She tried in vain: but she promised to meet him the next day near the same spot.

In the meantime she had leisure to reflect on what had passed. She had engaged to pay another visit to Mr. Scudamore in the following week; and this also it would be disingenuous not to communicate to Huntley.

On the whole she was comforted by the sentiments expressed by Huntley,

and was inclined to persuade herself that his affections were not changed. But she could not entirely obliterate from her mind what had been so mischievously told her by Browne.

When the morning came, she met Huntley at the appointed hour, and, after a short conversation, told him of her late visit to Mr. Scudamore, and of the person she met there. Huntley received the information with an agitation and displeasure which he could not conceal. Alice had never from her earliest acquaintance with him, seen him in such an ill humour before. He was even bitter, and almost reproached her. It was evident, that jealousy mixed itself up with these feelings; but that this was not the only objection he had to Browne. He expressed his abhorrence of his deceitful and base character.

He seemed to have some questions on his mind, which he dared not clothe in words. He talked mysteriously to Alice,

and appeared to make allusions which she could not comprehend. Yet Alice felt the utmost confusion: she had a consciousness that Browne had endeavoured to prejudice Huntley in her eyes, and that she had at last listened to him with more complacency than was quite consistent with the warmth and purity of her affection for Huntley.

Huntley could hardly persuade himself, on mature reflection, that the unfortunate fragment of a letter, which had reached him as the wrapper of Browne's coins, was really in the hand of Alice, or addressed to Browne himself; but it was one of those extraordinary coincidences, which it was scarcely possible entirely to efface from his memory.

He knew well, that if she had not been guilty of this profligate perfidy, the charging her with any thing so inexpressibly base, would rouse her just resentment, and forfeit her love and good opinion, probably for ever. But he de-

scribed Browne in terms, which, while he thought them true, would, he conceive, put her to her trial, whether she had been in familiar correspondence with him.

He represented him as a man who made a mockery of women's faith, who boasted of their favours, who would at any time sacrifice them to his vanity ; of whom hypocrisy and falsehood were the daily and hourly practice. There was nothing in the countenance of Alice that looked like a consciousness of that letter, of which the suspicion had been the cause of so much misery to Huntley.

Alice perceived that he suspected her of some partiality to Browne, she knew not what. This the more distressed her, because her visit at Mr. Scudamore's in the following week was very likely to be broken in upon by this man, in defiance of her wishes to avoid him. Yet she did not choose to give up this visit, because

there she hoped again to pass a few days under the same roof with Huntley.

It was an unpropitous moment to mention this engagement; but her good sense told her, that to defer the mention would be to give cause to those suspicions she was so anxious to allay. She said to him: "You seem offended at this last visit of mine to Mr. Scudamore's. This is doubly painful to me, because, I confess, I had looked forward to another visit there next week with great pleasure, as I had trusted I should be certain of meeting you there; for you are a great favourite with Mr. Scudamore, and when he knows you are in the neighbourhood, and well enough to go out, it is certain that he will invite you."

Huntley started: the feelings at the moment rose up in his bosom in a mixture of joy and pain. The thought of meeting Alice at that house darted on him with delight; but the image of Browne crossed him, and clouded the ray. "Are

you sure, that Browne will not be there?" cried he.

"I cannot be sure of that," she answered, "because I have not the control over Mr. Scudamore's invitations."

"I know not how to meet him," said Huntley.

"Lay aside that impetuosity," she replied, with a mild rebuke, softened by a smile of tenderness, "you and I are not to be at the mercy of such a man, as Mr. Browne."

These words calmed, and re-assured him. He resolved and promised to meet her at Scudamore's next week, and they parted.

CHAP. XVI.

ALICE MAKES ANOTHER VISIT TO MR. SCUDAMORE, MEETING HUNTLEY THERE BY AGREEMENT.— BROWNE FORCES HIMSELF UPON THE PARTY. — BEHAVIOUR OF HIM AND HUNTLEY TOWARDS EACH OTHER.

THE interval seemed long till the lovers met at Mr. Scudamore's. The day passed without the interruption of Browne, and each, in the joy of the other's company, felt a sort of complacence, that each strove to communicate to all who were present. Besides Mr. Scudamore's family, there were two ladies and a gentleman on a visit from London.

They brought the news from the capital, and threw an infusion of new incidents into the monotonous intelligence of the country. They gave a history of what was passing at the court, and an account of

the poets and other authors most in fashion at the moment. The metaphysical verse-writers now reigned in supreme dominion. *George Wither* indeed wrote in a different style, and poured out his unpremeditated verses, whether pastorals or satires, from a cottage or a prison.—George, though too diffuse, was a much greater favourite with Huntley, than these metaphysicians. His grand example of true poetry, Spenser, was rapidly going out of fashion. Many circumstances induced him to have a fondness for old George Chapman, and to one less known as a poet, but who was his personal acquaintance, Sir John Beaumont, the elder brother of the dramatist.

This tone of conversation brought back to Huntley's mind, the energy of the days before he went to *Wolstenholme so inauspiciously*. He talked with his former flow, and not only Alice, but all the company listened to him with high interest.

He had learned something of a more mellowed and practical sentiment; he had mixed it up with what he had heard, and even what he had experienced of the events of "many-coloured life." The person, from whom he had learned most was Giles Grey, who, though quiet, inobstrusive, and even languid, continually let out, in mere carelessness, the richest treasures of an over-loaded mind. In his attendance upon Prince Henry, whose amiable, brilliant, busy, and adventurous character, threw his companions in the way of a thousand extraordinary observations; he had laid up the sources of so many regrets of such a pensive and pathetic morality, so full of thought, so touching to the heart, so enlightened by fancy, so elevated by the brighter and more airy parts of learning, that all which came from him, though little valued by himself, was ore of the purest stamp.

But Huntley did not mention his

name. He carefully avoided any allusion to the House of Wolstenholme; so carefully, that the very avoidance created a little uneasiness in Alice. She perceived how much his mind had enlarged in the period of his absence. Her idea of the character of the Greys did not seem to justify such an effect from his residence at Wolstenholme.

A mere man of the world has no soil in his mind, in which to sow the seeds of knowledge and experience. What springs up in it is either dry and heartless; or is weeds. A fertile soil, without culture, produces what is crude and tasteless. A rich intellectual soil, dulcified by reading, observation, and reflection, produces a harvest of the most instructive and estimable wealth. To talk with depth, and energy, and eloquence, yet without ambition, or ostentation; to speak with that sort of sincerity, which seems to be the involuntary vent of the bosom, attaches the

cultivated hearer, as if he could live upon the words.

"What is the charm," said the company to themselves, "that we find in this young man's conversation? He has not lived in courts; he has not been engaged in the busy scenes of life. Bred in a remote vicarage; when used to high company, used only to soldiers and peers in the occupation of their rural amusements; himself a sportsman, full of the fire of youth; with less time for reflection than for the rude pleasures of the field! What is the spell, by which all this has been effected? It seems as if those beautiful, soft, and intelligent eyes of Alice Berkeley had at least some concern in it!"

It seemed, as if the village was haunted; indeed, it had been many years said, and believed, that the *Hall of Hellingsley* was thoroughly and frightfully haunted. In the night both Huntley and Alice again heard voices in the air;

songs; and trample of horsemen; and bells sounding; and dogs baying.

Huntley and Alice took a long walk the next morning. It was their fate, as it seemed, in these haunts, to be pursued by the gypsies. They imagined they saw Kate and her companion Sim, at a distance. They listened: these people were in eager conversation. At length it rose to high words. It seemed as if the woman at last distinctly said: "*I will 'peach, if thou dost, as sure as thou livest, thou wretch, I will 'peach!*" The man appeared to answer in a deep, hoarse, but lower tone: "*Cat of Hell, go thy way! I will be even with thee for this!*" They shrunk into the brushwood, and Huntley and Alice neither saw, nor heard any more of them.

At dinner, they had just sat down to the table, when in burst Mr. Browne. Alice turned pale; Huntley reddened, and even trembled. This did not escape Browne, but he affected to take no notice of it.

He soon fell into conversation, and kept it up, notwithstanding the frowns of Huntley.

The company were willing to listen to a new talker, more brilliant than Huntley, though less soothing: more pointed, and epigrammatic, and witty; with more of the artifices of high fashion, and more of the weight arising from a maturer age.

Huntley now and then made a surly or sarcastic observation, which the other fenced off with a raillery and pleasantry never to be put down. As he kept his temper, he had too often the better of Huntley, which, of course, had the effect of making him more bitter.

Alice sat in an agony. She expected every moment that this bitterness would break into an open rupture. She saw that Huntley was prepared for a quarrel, and disposed to it; and she was convinced, that Browne's unquestioned courage

would incline him to accept it, whenever his humour or views would permit it.

The storm continued to gather.— Browne at last began to grow ruffled. Each aimed dark allusions at the other. Alice looked anxiously and piteously at Huntley, as if to intreat him to govern his impetuosity; then again she looked at Browne as if to beg him to spare her.

At length Mr. Scudamore interfered. He was not satisfied with calling on them not to make his house the scene of their quarrels. He put to them the difference of their ages; the respect due on one side; the candor and indulgence due on the other. He shamed both into at least temporary acquiescence.

Huntley spent a night of horrible perturbation; nor was the heart of Alice much more at ease. As soon on the following day as Huntley could get an opportunity of speaking to Alice alone, he reproached her with her attempt to prevent him from taking vengeance of

Browne. He reproached her also for the looks she gave to Browne, as if they understood each other. In fact, the seeds of jealousy were yet rankling in his bosom.

Alice, who guessed not what appearances against her, Browne had contrived to put into the hands of Huntley, wept with horror at the injustice, of which she conceived Huntley guilty towards her. " I have given you my heart," she said: " You know you have it; and I think it is wantoning with your power too early, thus to treat me! For what purpose could I look at Mr. Browne as well as you, but to spare you this quarrel?— Browne is not worth your resentment. I agree with you, that he is an hardened, unprincipled man. I observed him yesterday in the commencement of his conversation, and recollecting what he had said on former occasions, I felt quite convinced that he has no fixed principles."

When jealousy has entered the mind, every thing turns to poison. This very speech rather operated as a source of new suspicion to Huntley. "It seems then," he thought to himself, "Alice has not suspected him before. She now begins to find him out! Might she not have sent this letter to him, before she found him found out? A touch, a breath, from that polluted man is pestilence to what it reaches. Beautiful as Alice is, and pure as I yet believe her, I would throw her from me in disdain if I could be convinced that a momentary thought of kindness towards Browne ever crossed her mind."

"Alice," he said, "that man has been my torment, from the day I first met him at Mr. Scudamore's. He is a man of the world, and a man of great talents; but great talents combined with a knowledge of the world, and a bad heart, are the most dreadful scourges of society. I know not why his intermin-

able resentment is pointed at me. But the fact is proved by a succession of the most extraordinary and cruel incidents. He has insinuated himself into the favour of Sir Ambrose Grey, and, I am sorry to say, has taken too much possession of his mind. With this introduction he came to Wolstenholme some time ago, and has done mischief there, for which he never can make amends. If I could bring myself to suppose that Providence ever permits evil spirits for its inscrutable purposes to take the human shape, I should not doubt that Browne was one of those evil spirits. He has many of the attributes we assign to such beings; their abilities, their cunning, their love of mischief for mischief's sake, their perverseness and obliquity, their unaccountable and unappeasable desire of destroying human happiness."

"Then why," cried Alice, "will you put yourself in his power, Huntley? Why expose yourself to his wiles? On

my knees I intreat you," (and she fell upon her knees,) "to govern your just resentment, to defeat his wiles by keeping outward peace with him, and thus far to calm the agony of my fears; and if I shall have any means of rewarding you, consistent with virtue, I pledge myself to do it with fervor and gratitude."

Huntley lifted her up, kissed her hand, and wept upon her shoulder. "I cannot resist this," he said: "*You* order, and I *must* obey!"

There was a generous and glowing simplicity in this behaviour of Alice, which calmed Huntley's suspicions. He promised her to exercise his utmost forbearance towards Browne, but he hinted that she could not guess at the mischievous tricks of which he had been guilty.

In the state of mind in which Huntley had been, Alice dared not propose that he should quit the house, and leave her there. She was equally afraid to go

away herself, and leave Huntley with Browne. If both were to depart together, injurious rumours would be raised against them. Yet, notwithstanding all Huntley's promises, she dreaded another stormy evening.

When they met again at dinner, there was a good deal of constraint and embarrassment for the first half hour. Browne himself seemed to have lost something of his usual self-possession. Huntley was resolved to show himself worthy in the eyes of Alice of her confidence. He exerted himself, and talked with tolerable calmness. Browne thought that he had gone too far, and apparently wished to conciliate. He knew Huntley to have a very determined and even chivalrous spirit, and though he thought himself the better swordsman and the better marksman, yet it would not answer his purpose to kill, or even wound Huntley in an open duel. Sir Ambrose Grey would

never forgive him, and, though he had great influence over him, on the other hand, he seemed to be much in Sir Ambrose's power.

He now made many efforts, even of civility, towards Huntley, which, however, were so coldly received, as almost to amount to surliness. Not having a spark of feeling, this did not at all discourage him; but his sagacity told him, that he must use another method. He spoke but little to Alice, who showed by her looks, how desirous she was to avoid conversation with him.

Having concealed from Alice, when he talked with her at his late visit, that he had himself so recently been making a long stay at Wolstenholme, and not having pretended that he had himself any opportunity of knowing any thing about the truth of the rumours he had related to Alice concerning Huntley, he forbore at present declaring himself a

witness of the attempted marriage with Margaret Grey.

In this manner the evening was passed, rather in a sort of cessation of hostilities than of sincere peace.

CHAP. XVII.

FORCED RECONCILIATION OF HUNTLEY AND BROWNE. — ALICE RETURNS TO THE RECTORY, AND THENCE TO HARDINGVILLE — HUNTLEY TO CHEEVELEY.

At length, by Alice's mediation, something of a forced reconcilement took place before the parties quitted the house of Mr. Scudamore. Alice returned to the rectory, and Huntley to the vicarage.

Each had leisure and opportunity to reflect on what had passed in the tranquillity of solitude. There seemed a fate over their lives, that appeared to allot clouds and storms as the followers of every momentary sunshine. The life of each had been marked by the most trying events; family misfortunes on her part; personal sufferings on his. They had both plunged themselves into a

mutual attachment, from which they did not see the means of extricating themselves; without prospects on either side, of fortune, or even competence. Alice could not entirely forget the story about Huntley's attempted marriage with Margaret Grey, and Huntley could not entirely forget the fragment of the letter, which inclosed Browne's coins. Futurity was dark to them both; the past was full of pain.

Love is a romantic passion, which often draws its food from difficulties. Those which had befallen Alice, and those also which had befallen Huntley, were of a kind well calculated for this purpose. It was imagination alone; the ray that gilds the future with imaginary hopes, which could have supported her through such sorrows; it was the same power, that only could have borne up her lover above the obstacles that beset him. But this power, sometimes consolatory, sometimes animating, is sometimes also delu-

sive. It leads those, whom it inspires, too frequently to trust against all probability. It leads them to fix their eyes upon objects at a distance, when all their prudence and vigilance is required to guard against the enemies who closely surround them. This is, indeed, the great evil and danger of imagination, as far as it concerns success and happiness in life.

It was to imagination, that the lovers owed days, and weeks, and months of high enjoyment, chastised, indeed, by that deep sorrow, which sets it off, that mixed and contrasted effect so nobly and sublimely described in Gray's magnificent unfinished *Ode on Vicissitude.* From her very childhood, Alice had brooded on the misfortunes of her family. It was privation and mortified pride, and regret for reckless profusion, and dread of future wants. But then there came in the glory of reflected lustre; the picture of past splendors; the intellectual power

that can live both in the past and in the future, as well as in the present; and with this additional advantage, that while the present is always accompanied by some coarse reality to destroy its charm, the ideal world is all such pure felicity as the fancy chooses to make it.

The being, who has been elbowed about by society, and whether by necessity or choice, lives in daily and hourly intercourse with it, brings himself down, by habit, if not by inclination, to a *matter of fact* sort of understanding, which accustoms itself to consider whatever is visionary to be unsound, light, and childish. The *nil admirari* is taken as one of the marks of politeness, and a knowledge of life. A sort of chastised raillery; sly ironical remarks; the habit of treating every thing as a jest, or so doubtfully that it may be taken either way, is deemed the sign of one familiar with good company. A spark of enthusiasm; a serious glance at an ideal plea-

sure; a supposition of grand and disinterested sentiment, but as a pretence for public purposes, is thought the mark of a driveller or a dreamer. The consequence is, that he, who has the reputation of excelling in conversation, has, in general, the moment he sets pen to paper, lost his charm. All that technical piquancy, the point, the witticism, the humorous, or insidious irony, are intransmissible through the pen. The *litera scripta manet*; it stands to be examined, and it will not bear examination.

The course of life both of Alice and of Huntley exempted them from this damp to their imaginations. At Hardingville there had been every thing to give full swing to Alice's native warmth of fancy. It is the present fashion to consider the pride of descent as an idle and empty pretension. But it cannot be denied, that it is a pretension, which has been regarded in every country, in all ages. The claims of the present age to

a superior and more enlightened wisdom, do not appear to be well founded. Almost all the parts of moral and political policy of the present century, which stand upon a firm basis, are to be found in the writings of the best philosophers of former times. There are many sound philosophical arguments in favour of a regard to birth, which the present pretenders to deeper reasoning do not appear to be at all aware of. It is a counteraction to the undue influence of wealth and mere brutal power. It is impossible to prevent the accumulation of wealth in the basest of the people; at least, in a free country. The easiest paths to wealth are the meanest, and the least virtuous. Of those who have made their fortunes otherwise than by the liberal professions, more than three-fourths have been made by usurers, and those who feed upon the blood of necessity, or by wild and dishonest speculation, which has turned out successfully. Fair traders

are long in making great riches. If their gains are sometimes great, their losses also are great; and the average gain, if sure, is slow. But the opinion now adopted, is, that wealth *is wealth*; and that he who can spend the most, is the most important man; and that it is idle and childish to pay any attention to how or whence he got it. These are very useful and natural doctrines for the * * * * s and the * * * * * s, to promulgate with all their might! but how the * * * s, &c. can be such dottrels as to fall into this snare, is not only surprizing but must excite the contempt of the reflecting mind.

It was not so in the days of Alice Berkeley. There were then, as at all times, certain interested classes, as well as interested individuals, who would always hold such doctrines; but the true aristocracy knew their own place, and held firm to it. There was in the house of Berkeley, a sort of traditional spirit, of

which the effects upon the mind cannot be analysed by language. It had a tendency to make a lofty sort of sentiment rather than a low and selfish gratification prevail, as the guide of the thoughts and the conduct. It could find a thousand ideal comforts in adversity and obscurity, which new families, thrown back into poverty, cannot command.

Alice was, in a few days after the last incident, called back to Hardingville. Her father, Sir Oliver, still lingered out his days; but the lamp of life alternately blazed feebly, and sunk again. She could not remain long without seeking out her humble friend, Susan Pembury. Susan received her visit with mild thankfulness. She was sitting on a bench of the cottage garden, looking down upon a wooded glen, through which two of the keepers were driving a herd of the deer. Alice took her seat by her, and they soon afterwards strolled down the path that led back to the hall, together.

Alice perceived that Susan had something to say, which she was fearful of commencing without encouragement. She asked her if she had any thing more to tell of the story, that she had formerly related to her. Susan answered, "Yes, dear Lady Alice, I have much to tell, if I had courage to tell it."

"Have you made any discoveries?"

"I think, I have," she rejoined.

"The unknown blue-feathered horseman! have you found him out?"

"I believe, I cannot be mistaken," she cried.

"And is it satisfactory?"

"I dare not say it is satisfactory. The noble and honoured stranger is too lofty for your poor Susan," and then she wept. Alice would have comforted her, but it was some time before she was composed enough to go on.

At length she said, "I had heard nothing of the stranger for some time, and my anxieties became too great to

endure. I got my mother's leave to absent myself for a few days, under pretence of paying a visit to a friend at a distant village, and I had, what I am afraid you will call extreme folly, to set off to consult the little person, whom we peasants call *The cunning man*, and whom perhaps you have heard of by the name of *Hal of the Hall.*

" A woman joined me on my second day's walk, whom, in the solitary road in which I found myself, I was glad to have for a companion. She had, I admit, the appearance of a gypsey, but she was a very extraordinary woman. She had a great spirit, and a vast volubility of tongue, and used the most powerful words. She made me tremble, but yet I listened to her with interest, as well as awe.

" We found little Hal at his usual haunt, at a bench under a great oak tree in the forest of Wolstenholme. My companion, who called herself Brown

Bess, accosted him first, but she soon quarrelled with him, because his opinions and predictions did not agree with her views. I cannot deny that, what he told me, gave me nearly as much pain as pleasure.

"But Bess would force me, (after staining my face with walnut-juice, and discolouring my hair, for the purpose of disguise), up to the castle of Wolstenholme with her. There we heard of poor Mr. Huntley's illness, which, as you have mentioned to-day that you have since seen him well at Cheeveley, I need not dwell upon.

"But Bess went up to his chamber to see him, and when she returned and joined me, she broke out into a tempest of grief at the state of danger and insensibility in which she found him. The singular circumstance is, that she took the distant figure of a horseman, whom we saw on the road, to be his ghost.

"I was scarcely less affected at this

figure, but for a different reason. Who do you think this figure was? It was the *blue-feathered* horseman of Norton-Berkeley fair. I am sure it was. Yet when he approached us, I turned away, and hid my face under my cloak by leaning over a gateway. You ask why? In the first place, I was overcome with surprize and tumult; and besides, I cannot conceal from my respected and kind Lady Alice, that I could not bear he should see me in that frightful disguise. I thought that I should become odious to him!

"Bess fell on her knees, as she came close to him, and he stopped to speak to her. I heard his melodious, tender voice. I heard his gentle and benevolent enquiries; but I dared not turn to look upon his benign and noble countenance. Bess said, that he was the very counterpart of Mr. Huntley; she had never seen such a likeness; but not so tall.

"You cannot doubt who this revered

person was. I tremble at my insufferable presumption while I pronounce his name; it was the only son of Lord Grey, of Wolstenholme Castle. He is reverenced almost as a God in that country. Nothing was ever equal to the enthusiasm with which people of my condition speak of him.

"When I reflect on this, and consider that he has thought me worthy of his notice, I can hardly believe my recollections; I consider myself in a dream; and I am overwhelmed with anxiety, because I cannot bring myself to have an assurance that such unexampled felicity can last.

"It is said, that he is out of health. What, if he should die! would it be possible to retain my senses? Or if he should desert me? I cannot think he will do that now; though, alas! it is long since I have seen him, except thus by stealth."

She could speak no more! She almost

sunk upon the arm of Alice. They sat down upon a bank; and Alice soothed her, while giving vent to her tears.

She afterwards accompanied Alice almost to the steps of the great gateway of Hardingville. When Alice reached her own apartment, she fell upon her bed, and indulged herself in a train of the most sorrowful reflections. "How strangely woven and crossed," said she, "are the events of this stormy world! Where are all these mysteries, and inconsistencies, and perversities to end? What next is to await me of inexplicable fatality? In what new way are the houses of Grey and Berkeley to be the means of each other's misery, and debasement, and destruction? Is it not clear that Sir Ambrose Grey is the father of Huntley? What if he should turn out to be his legitimate father? Yet, mark! the daughter of one of my father's keepers runs away, at least, with the heart of the amiable heir of this great

house! I do not envy Susan. She deserves it; she is beautiful, and good. But not to perceive that it is strange, and that things are somewhat perverse, would be to lose one's understanding."

She dreamed on the following night, that fiery trials yet awaited her; that she was to pass to bliss through a region of torments; that temptations and threats were to surround and beset her; that she was to step upon the threshold of death, and yet be saved!

Meanwhile Huntley gave himself up to the solitude of Cheeveley. His reflections were not less mingled with pain than those of Alice. He could not avert his mind from dwelling sometimes on the numerous odd incidents which had occurred at Wolstenholme. He was anxious about Sir Ambrose Grey, whose kindness to him had been unquestionable. He could not totally forget the partiality of Margaret Grey. For her brother, Giles, he had a most unfeigned

affection. Even old Lord Grey had his warm wishes.

With all this uneasiness, increased by suspense, he could not bring himself at present to visit Wolstenholme. Yet he could not guess at the fate, which was in store for him. He could see no rational prospects; yet he lived in the delirium of hope.

He looked down upon the *Hall of Hellingsley* with a fear, that made his heart ache. Though Sir Ambrose Grey had brought him up, yet he had never once received him in that old mansion. There seemed to be the grave of Sir Ambrose's fame. The common people spoke of it with terror. Such were their mysterious superstitions, that they would not approach it of a night. And certainly extraordinary noises, and extraordinary lights were often heard and seen about it. Even from the spots in the neighbourhood of the vicarage, Huntley often, while wandering in the silence of

evening to indulge his contemplations, heard and saw them!

Up in the openings of the tracks on the side hill of the opposite forest, he had often seen by moonlight something like bands of horsemen moving in quick pace, and heard sometimes shrill and sometimes muffled sounds of bugles. Then the noise of the movement died away, as if retiring more secretly to the village of Hellingsley.

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